NOTES ON SPIRITUAL HEALING

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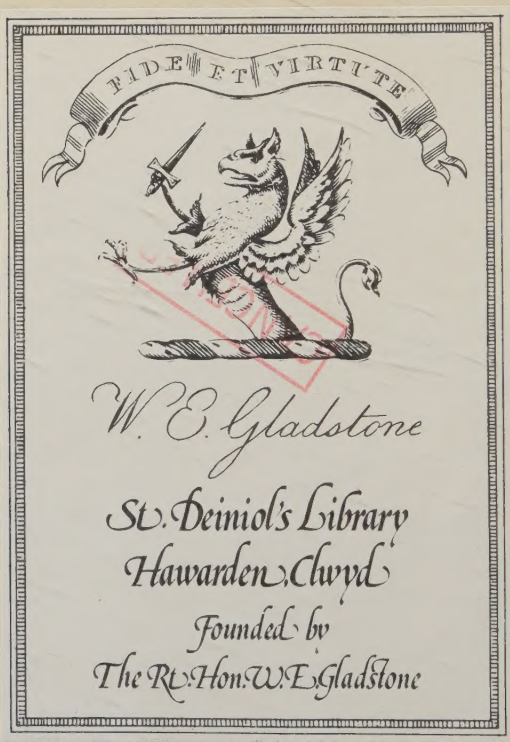
Faith Healing



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NOTES ON SPIRITUAL HEALING

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NOTES ON
SPIRITUAL HEALING

BY

HERBERT HENSLEY HENSON, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF DURHAM

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THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED WITH

THE AUTHOR'S

RESPECT AND AFFECTION

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INTRODUCTION

I

This book does not pretend to be a treatise on psycho-therapy, nor yet a history of miraculous healing. It leaves the students of medical science to deal with the first, and the anthropologists and students of comparative religion to handle the last. Neither concerns directly the practical question which now demands answer from the leaders of the Christian Church. In modern Christendom physical healing has become the business of scientifically-trained physicians; is there any reason why it should now be taken partly or wholly out of their hands? Psycho-therapy, as a method of physical healing, is becoming part and parcel of their practical system. It has, perhaps, hardly yet established its position completely, and there is still great variety of opinion among the physicians as to its value and range of application. Medical science, however, while it has definitely re-

placed the theurgic healings distinctive of uncivilised and superstitious communities, has never wholly succeeded in gaining the confidence of those sections of modern society in which primitive notions linger and from time to time revive. Civilisation has dark foundations of aboriginal savagery, and sometimes the fact is forced on our reluctant attention. Under the pressure of abnormal experiences the buried and forgotten beliefs of the savage may emerge from their underworld, and perplex the minds of civilised men. Wars are prolific of fanaticism because, not only do they shatter the fabric of civilised order, and paralyse all the factors which normally hold the cruder tendencies in check, but also because they give disastrous encouragement to everything in human life which is least moral and least rational. The religious revivals, which commonly accompany, and sometimes follow, wars, are in great part revivals of the baser elements in religion, and assuredly stimulate every form of superstition.

Thirty years ago I lived in Essex, and there became familiar with the curious phenomenon known as religious healing. That part of England has ever been rich in sectaries, and it is probable that no form of

grotesque and irrational error is unrepresented in its strangely mingled population. Plymouth Brethren and other Bibliolatrous Protestants were then numerous, and among them "faith-healing" had considerable extension both in theory and in practice. From time to time a tragedy happened. The theory was pressed beyond the limits which public opinion could tolerate or the law permit. Children, sick of mortal diseases, perished under the prayers of their parents, when they might have lived under the treatment of the doctors. Inquests, prosecutions, fines, imprisonments followed. The dismal course of retributive justice brought into painful prominence the unbridgeable chasm which severs the fanatic from the conceptions of duty which govern normal citizens. Armed with texts from the Bible, and protected by a brazen shield of invincible prejudice from all the correctives of literalism which learning can suggest and humaneness welcome, the undaunted bigots emerged from gaol as obstinate and convinced as before. But a change has passed over Society. Time is bringing them their recompense. The cause in which their children died, and they suffered, is actually gaining adherents. The nation,

no longer protected by vaccination, is inviting the return of the foul scourge of smallpox, over which it was vainly supposed that medical science had definitely triumphed. "Faith-healing" is now patronised by Society, approved by bishops, and elaborately defended by writers who, if not scientific in temper, do at least make liberal use of scientific language.

"Spiritual healing" is an amalgam of the old literalist "faith-healing" and a quasi-scientific psycho-therapy. It builds on the "new psychology," and makes bold use of the Freudian method of "psycho-analysis." It rewrites the traditional theology of the Christian Church, and revives the beliefs and methods of primitive and medieval religion. In the Protestant sphere, the authority of the sacred text, understood in crudely literal fashion, is appealed to by its advocates. In the "Catholic" sphere, as well Roman as Anglican, the appeal is made mainly to the sacramental theory and practice of the Church. Both Protestants and Catholics hold, that Christians have in their religion curative resources which, if duly used with right intention and sufficient faith, can bring the limitless power of the Almighty to the physical relief of man. Medical science

is, indeed, generally allowed to be a valuable possession of civilised mankind, but always along with it the devout believer is encouraged to take account of this higher and more mysterious source of physical health. The prayer of faith *may* effect what the physicians and surgeons cannot achieve : and there is nothing that *they* can do which cannot be done even more effectually by the virtue of relics, the prayers of believers, the healing grace of saints, or the Divine power of the Blessed Sacrament.

Mr Hickson is, indeed, able to produce emphatic testimonies to the *spiritual* results of his Missions of Healing.[1] Archbishops and bishops unite with less responsible persons in attesting them. Thus Dr Foss Westcott, Bishop of Calcutta, writes to him that " the spiritual results are more striking than the physical benefits," and adds, " it amply justifies your claim that your work is on the spiritual plane, and is spiritual healing." [2] Bishop M'Innes writes from Jerusalem : " While of visible results there have been not a few,

[1] Not the least valuable part of the volume *Heal the Sick* is the light it throws on Anglican opinion as expressed by the bishops.

[2] P. 67.

nevertheless the majority of those who speak or write to us lay emphasis on the spiritual blessings they have received." [1] From South Africa, Bishop Graham writes that, "while physical healing and strengthening were given in many cases, the spiritual blessing was practically universal." [2] The whole Anglican hierarchy in Australia bears a similar testimony. There are many such assurances that, whatever may have been the extent or quality of the *physical* healing, the *spiritual* results of the Missions were apparent, general, and salutary.

But numerous and confident as the testimonies must be allowed to be, they wake in a thoughtful mind more misgiving than confidence. *Physical* healing can be tested and certified, but *spiritual* results are not so easily to be recognised and tabulated. What indeed is meant by spiritual results? Exaltation of spirit? That may be a transient mood born of emotion and excitement. Moral improvement, the conquest of sinful habit or natural infirmity, and the development of character? These can only be disclosed gradually, and identified safely, by the slow and searching probation of experience.

[1] *Heal the Sick*, p. 96. [2] P. 119.

Moreover, even if the certainty and genuineness of the alleged spiritual results be conceded, is it to be understood that the *physical* healing of some brings about the *spiritual* benefit of others? What becomes, then, of Mr Anson's definition of "spiritual healing?" It runs thus:

> "I mean by spiritual healing the healing of the whole personality—not the body only, or chiefly, but rather the healing of the body *through* the building up of the character." [1]

Surely this must mean that, in whatever proportions, the physical and the spiritual healing are exhibited *in the same individual.* Again, if this be not the case, and in most cases there are *no* physical effects, but only spiritual, what is the meaning or fitness of the appeal which the Australian Hierarchy addresses to medical men? They are urged "as men of science and observers of phenomena to endeavour to do justice to the facts of this movement as they stand—to enlarge their view of disease in order to embrace spiritual methods of healing, as it has already been enlarged to embrace mental

[1] *Spiritual Healing*, p. v.

and psychical alongside physical methods." Psycho-therapy is a method of healing physical disease: it must stand or fall on its competence to do *that*. The psycho-therapeutist who excused his failure to heal his patient, by pleading the excellent effect which psycho-therapy had on others in correcting "materialism," would be very justly laughed out of court.

The case for "spiritual healing" must be made good on the ground of its physical results, or surrendered altogether. Spiritual results have always followed the preaching of Christianity. They are claimed by the great multitude of mission preachers, and no doubt justly. The introduction of the claim to work miracles of bodily healing adds an element of intense excitement to the preaching, but it does not appear to increase its spiritual effectiveness. On the contrary, there is reason for thinking that, when the inevitable reaction follows, as the tide of artificially stimulated emotion ebbs, this claim to work physical cures, which in the majority of cases fails to be justified, becomes a source of grave spiritual mischiefs.

"What will be the effect of the disappointment upon the uncured?" asks the Rev.

William Paxton, a not unsympathetic student of the recent Bradford Mission. "The Australian bishops said that the 'uncured, instead of being alienated from a faith which failed them, are conscious of a new life within them, and a new outlook on all life,' *but that has not been my experience with the disappointed ones in Bradford.*" [1]

Certainty of effect would seem to be as indispensable a mark of Divine action as beneficent purpose. "One of the peculiarities of the cures ascribed to Christ is their invariable success," wrote Newman in his famous *Essay on Miracles.* Lack of faith did, indeed, inhibit His miraculous power, and He was wont to insist on the indispensableness of faith in those who sought His aid. But He is recorded to have healed all that came to Him for cure, and who, by thus coming, disclosed at least some measure of confidence in His power. It is impossible to find in the Evangelists' narratives of Christ's healing any parallel to such general failure as admittedly marked the Missions of Healing which Mr Hickson conducted and clothes the Grotto of Lourdes with the pathos of baffled aspiration.

[1] *British Weekly*, 22nd October 1924.

II

" Spiritual healing," we have said, assumes the new psychology associated with the name of the Viennese professor, Sigmund Freud, and adopts his method of psycho-analysis. The method cannot be said to have so definitely established itself as to be beyond the need of apology, but it appears to be winning its way to general acceptance, in spite of the natural repugnance which has been aroused against it by Freud's crazy and disgusting over-emphasis of the sexual factor. Other factors, as for example self-preservation, are probably far more widely operative.[1] How far the method of psycho-analysis is suitable for general use, and what are the conditions under which it should be used at all, are practical questions of great importance to which experience has hardly yet provided final answers. We are still in the experimental stage, and the victims of experiment are many. But it is already apparent that the risks attending the practice of psycho-analysis are very formidable, that misuse is extremely easy, and that the results which it secures may in many cases be gained in

[1] Rivers, *Instinct and the Unconscious*, p. 4.

other and safer ways. Psycho-therapy is not necessarily committed to psycho-analysis, and in any case psycho-analysis is no panacea for all psychic ills. Some words of Dr Bramwell may be usefully quoted :

> " While the Freudians have provided us with a working hypothesis of much value, there are one or two prevalent misconceptions in relation to psycho-analysis which call for correction. Thus the somewhat wide-spread idea that psycho-therapy and psycho-analysis are synonymous terms is quite erroneous. Psycho-therapy we employ in the treatment of every case with which we meet, while psycho-analysis is a term applied to particular methods of psycho-therapy which are only to be employed in specially selected cases in which other legitimate psycho-therapeutic measures have failed to effect a cure." [1]

Dr M'Bride's little book, *Psycho-analysts Analysed*, is a vigorous and telling criticism,

[1] Inaugural Address, Moncrieff-Arnott Chair of Clinical Medicine, *Edin. Med. Journal*, January 1923, quoted in M'Bride's *Psycho-analysts Analysed*.

which merits careful attention. Assuming, however, the soundness of the method, the risks attending its application by incompetent or unscrupulous practitioners are very great. The requisites of competence are considerable, and can be very rarely provided. Thus the Rev. Harold Anson writes :

> " It is very important that the healer should have a good deal of psychological experience. If he has no knowledge of psychology, his powers as a healer will be very much restricted, and may even be completely nullified. He will then be wise to seek for the help of some qualified psychologist if the case be at all a serious one. And here again it must be noted that it is very difficult for even the most skilled psychologist to do his work if he has no physiological knowledge. For it requires a knowledge both of physiology and of psychology to know when people who are suffering severely from their minds are suffering through definite physical lesion or from the want of mental adjustment." [1]

[1] *Spiritual Healing*, p. 112.

Mr Anson describes the ill consequences of unskilful handling :

> " If it should seem necessary that the patient should have a full analysis of the mind, a spiritual healer, if he has to give advice on this subject, and is not competent himself to undertake the analysis, should be very certain, if he is called upon to recommend an analyst, that he is one who is not only able to pull the person to pieces, but is able to put him together again after he has been pulled to bits. It is not at all uncommon to find people analysed until they have lost all initiative and self-respect, and left to pull themselves together as best they can, because the analyst has himself no adequate synthesis of life which he can pass on to the patient. I know many patients who have had this experience, and their condition is deplorable beyond all expression." [1]

Even this is not all. There may be, Mr Anson tells us that " in the great majority of illnesses " there is, a " religious factor," and

[1] *Spiritual Healing*, p. 113.

then the patient must have recourse to confession, and run another series of formidable risks. Most confessors are ignorant of psychology, and most psychologists are not in Holy Orders ! It is hard to say which of the two, from the patient's point of view, is the more disastrous disqualification. Mr Anson is as usual candid and disconcerting :

> " Although, I believe, very often there is no better and sounder advice than that which is constantly being given by priests who have a real knowledge and love of souls, yet it is also true that an immense amount of harm is being done by religious advisers and directors who are ordained, and yet have no knowledge of psychology ; and a considerable number of people whose sufferings, though they may have a physical manifestation, are really religious or moral in origin, are turned away from clerical advisers because they get more skilful and enlightened advice from practitioners in psychology who are not hampered by an unfortunate ecclesiastical tradition. Confession, and the assurance of absolution, whatever form this may take, is a

very real requisite in many cases for a complete spiritual healing, and it needs to be followed by skilled spiritual direction." [1]

Here we are carried into a region which is unhappily but too familiar. Confession and direction bring dangers of their own. If the price of physical healing by non-physical means is to be the restoration of the ancient and long-abandoned domination of the priest in the sphere of the private conscience, we may well ask whether it be not excessive? Perhaps in the judgment of an informed and considering man, one of the weightiest arguments against any such association of healing and religion, as the theory of spiritual healing requires, is the inevitable debasement of religion. Sickrooms are the breeding-places of superstition, as marshes are of the mosquitoes which carry malaria: and the worst developments of that spiritual malady which is known as "sacerdotalism" are connected directly with the frailty and fears of invalids. No doubt it is also true, that physical suffering *religiously regarded* may become a moral discipline of priceless value, and that, there-

[1] *Spiritual Healing*, p. 116.

fore, there is a place in the sick man's experience for the sympathy and counsel of the Christian pastor. Confession, voluntary and specific, is equally natural and salutary; but the long conflicts of ecclesiastical history, which the Confessional has provoked, have not been occasioned by such confession. Nor is the confessor's ministry in that case one which demands technical training, but only genuine piety, pastoral sympathy and experience, and that rare quality which is absurdly called common sense. The counsel of the son of Sirach describes the relative positions of clergyman and doctor in the process of physical healing very admirably:

> "My son, in thy sickness be not negligent;
> But pray unto the Lord, and he shall heal thee.
> Put away wrongdoing, and order thine hands aright,
> And cleanse thy heart from all manner of sin. . . .
> Then give place to the physician, for verily the Lord hath created him;
> And let him not go from thee, for thou hast need of him.

There is a time when in their very hands
is the issue for good ;
For they also shall beseech the Lord,
That he may prosper them in giving
relief and in healing for the maintenance of life." [1]

It would be difficult to improve upon that counsel of ancient wisdom.

III

I cannot avoid an uncomfortable suspicion that the theological foundation of the argument for spiritual healing is unsound. At least it is difficult to reconcile with the accepted teaching of the Christian Church the language, which even so relatively moderate an exponent of the theory as the Rev. Harold Anson allows himself to use. His attitude towards the Old Testament suggests Marcion rather than the Catholic creeds, and his exaltation of love as the alpha and omega of Christianity has a suggestion of moral lopsidedness which differentiates it sharply from the teaching of the New Testament. In these high matters sentiment is not a safe

[1] Ecclesiasticus, xxxviii. 9 f.

guide, and the theology of spiritual healing is not unfairly described as sentimental. After all, the New Testament rests on the Old. Jesus Christ came in the succession of the Hebrew Prophets, and His supreme revelation incorporates and presupposes theirs. "*I came*," He said Himself, "*not to destroy but to fulfil.*" The modern practice of identifying Christianity with "the religion of Jesus," and constructing that religion out of the Gospel narratives *while ignoring the Apostolic version of Christianity which the Epistles express, and which beyond all question created historic Christianity*, is, to say the least, very questionable. Christian morality may not be simply reduced to an *imitatio Christi* in the naïvely literal sense of the Middle Ages. A liberal Jew, like Mr Claud Montefiore,[1] might indeed add the Prophet of Nazareth to the "goodly fellowship," and find in the Gospel no more than the exalted and purified Judaism which Jesus Himself taught and illustrated, but Christians must take account of other factors.

[1] *Hibbert Lectures*, 1892. Mr Montefiore contemplates the possibility of a reformed and universalised Judaism, which shall "be as spiritual as the religion of Jesus, and even more universal than the religion of Paul." P. 551.

For them the starting-point is, not the martyrdom on Calvary, but the Day of Pentecost. Between the life recorded by the Evangelists and the religion proclaimed by the Apostles, are the supreme events of Good Friday, Easter, Ascension, and Whitsunday. It does not appear that the depth and majesty of the religion, which has its vital centre in the Person of the Incarnate, are sufficiently realised by those who have accustomed themselves to unite sin and disease in a single description, and to give an overwhelmingly terrestrial reference to redemption. Orthodoxy is a word of mingled and dubious associations. It may well waken more resentments than it propitiates, yet, if it mean the main stream of Christian belief, "*the proportion of the faith*" as it stands in the New Testament and in the record of Christendom (and it can hardly mean less), then this secularised version of Christ's redemptive mission must be called unorthodox.

It may be generally true that every form of physical disease is contrary to the Will of God, and that physical health corresponds with the Divine intention for man. Does it, therefore, follow that we may assume in particular cases that it is God's Will that

recovery should take place, and that only lack of faith hinders that happy event? Mr Hickson and Mr Maillard are so confident on the point, that they seem to resent a reference to God's Will in prayers for the sick; and even Mr Anson, whose whole temper and outlook are more genuinely religious, uses language which tends in the same direction. Indeed, it hardly seems an unfair inference from the reasoning of spiritual healers, that a true Christian, living worthily of his profession, *could* never be ill, and that in his case even the natural physical terminus of death would be superseded by some different and less repulsive method.

All this is hard to reconcile with the teaching of the New Testament, the tradition of the Christian Church, the experience of saints, and the facts of life. It implies a very simple reading of the enigma presented by an universe, in which pain is entangled inextricably with the whole course of existence, and the ramifications of disease, physical and moral, are so wide and baffling as to defy human analysis. "*Here we see in a mirror darkly*," says St Paul; and, perhaps, in the judgment of a thoughtful man, no feature of Christ's religion is more attractive than its ample

recognition of an inevitable agnosticism side by side with its promise of ultimate redemption. The passion of the world is owned and felt at the centre, where the Creator Himself is revealed as the world's Redeemer; but the key to the pervading mystery is not given, and the path which the disciple must tread is strait and shadowed. "*Thy way is on the sea; and Thy paths in the great waters: and Thy footsteps are not known.*"

IV

I have called this little book *Notes on Spiritual Healing*, because it has no claim to be anything more. It brings together a number of considerations which cannot be excluded, rightly or prudently, from a serious discussion of the new doctrine—new to our generation, though indeed extremely old—which has invaded the religious world, and gained in the Church of England recently considerable patronage and support. What is here submitted leads clearly to two practical conclusions:

I. That no one, clergyman or layman, should be suffered publicly to undertake the work of physical healing who has not been

trained in medical science and is not commissioned by public authority.

II. That the specific duty of the clergyman does not include physical healing, nor can his professional training normally qualify him for the work.

I hold strongly that even those who possess the strange natural power which distinguishes "faith-healers" should not be free to charge fees or to receive gifts for healing unless, in addition to their natural power, they possess also medical training and the public commission.

I do not doubt that psycho-therapy is a valuable method of healing, nor that its range of application will be extended in the future; but I insist that it belongs properly to the domain of the physician, and cannot prudently be removed to any other. I do not see that the evidence indicates any method of healing which can fitly be described as specially "Divine," "Christian," or "Spiritual," though I admit that in many cases, and under certain conditions, the psycho-therapeutic method will be most effective when it disguises itself under religious formulæ and symbols. Religion affects health *indirectly*, and the contribution which the

Christian ministry can make to the conquest of disease must normally be *indirect.*

Any " revival " of a " ministry of healing " in the Church could only work out mischievously both for the health of individuals and the efficiency of the clergy. A co-operation of the physician and the pastor, based on a frank recognition of the distinctiveness of their respective ministries, would be advantageous to all parties concerned. " All healing is of God, whether the means employed be medicine or miracle," says Dr Dearmer, and none will challenge his statement. The only question is, whether *both* miracle *and* medicine be accessible to the sufferer ? For if so, there can be little doubt which he will choose As a curative method, miracle has evident advantages over medicine. It is surer, pleasanter, and also —cheaper. It is no matter for surprise, therefore, that wherever it is believed that both methods are available, sufferers choose miracle. They prefer the " faith-healer " to the physician. But this preference may lead to grave consequences, for the temporary alleviation, which in many cases is all that faith can gain from the healer's ministry, may induce a postponement of recourse to

the doctor or the surgeon until the "psychological moment," when healing was still possible, has passed. Even in those cases where physical cures have been obtained, it may be doubted whether injury, mental or moral, has not been inflicted. Beyond all doubt any general reversion to the primitive confusion of medicine and theurgic religion would be an immense misfortune to mankind.

HERBERT DUNELM.

AUCKLAND CASTLE,
1*st June* 1925.

NOTES ON SPIRITUAL HEALING

CHAPTER I

RELIGION AND HEALING

More than fifty years have passed since Dr Tuke published his well-known book, *Illustrations of the Influence of the Mind upon the Body in Health and Disease designed to elucidate the Action of the Imagination.* On the title-page he placed the following dictum of the illustrious surgeon, John Hunter: "There is not a natural action in the body, whether involuntary or voluntary, that may not be influenced by the peculiar state of the mind at the time." Common experience certified the fact which, he suggested, pointed the way to a therapeutic method of great value. "The force is there," he said, "acting irregularly and capriciously. The question is, whether it cannot be applied and guided with

skill and wisdom by the physician?" He appealed to his medical readers:

> "Again and again we exclaim, when some new nostrum, powerless in itself, effects a cure, 'It's only the Imagination!' We attribute to this remarkable mental influence a power which ordinary medicines have failed to exert, and yet are content, with a shrug of the shoulders, to dismiss the circumstance from our minds without further thought. I want medical men who are in active practice to utilise this force, to yoke it to the car of the Son of Apollo, and rescuing it from the eccentric orbits of quackery, force it to tread, with measured step, the orderly paths of legitimate medicine."
>
> "Remember," said Dr Rush in addressing medical students, "how many of our most useful remedies have been discovered by quacks. Do not be afraid, therefore, of conversing with them and of profiting by their ignorance and temerity. Medicine has its Pharisees as well as religion; but the spirit of this sect is as unfriendly to the advancement of medicine as it is to Christian charity."

Whatever justice there was in the implied reproach in 1872 has disappeared in 1925. A great revolution has taken place in medical opinion. Psycho-therapy has established itself in the use of the medical profession, and the range of its application is rapidly extending. Orthodox medicine, like orthodox theology, is shedding its traditional exclusiveness.

Imagination, indeed, has ever played a part in the healing process. The crude science of our ancestors owed much to its assistance, and the cleverer practitioners consciously sought its aid. The keen eye of Montaigne could detect the professional trick. "Why," he asks, "do the physicians possess, beforehand, their patients' credulity with so many false promises of cure, if not to the end, that the effect of imagination may supply the imposture of their decoctions?" He gives some examples from his own observation which demonstrate the strange authority which the mind wields over the body:

> "A woman, fancying she had swallowed a pin in a piece of bread, cried and lamented as though she had an intolerable pain in her throat, where she thought she felt it stick; but an ingenious fellow

that was brought to her, seeing no outward tumour nor alteration, supposing it to be only a conceit taken at some crust of bread that had hurt her as it went down, caused her to vomit, and, unseen, threw a crooked pin into the basin, which the woman no sooner saw, but believing she had cast it up, she presently found herself eased of her pain. I myself knew a gentleman who having treated a large company at his house, three or four days after bragged in jest (for there was no such thing) that he had made them eat of a baked cat; at which a young gentlewoman, who had been at the feast, took such a horror, that falling into a violent vomiting and fever, there was no possible means to save her. Even brute beasts are subject to the force of imagination as well as we; witness dogs, who die of grief for loss of their masters; and bark and tremble and start in their sleep; so horses will kick and whinny in their sleep." [1]

Such illustrations could be multiplied in-

[1] Essay "Of the Force of Imagination," Montaigne's *Essays*, translated by Cotton, ed. Hazlitt, i. p. 104.

definitely, and it is, perhaps, surprising that in face of them the recognition of the mental factor in healing should have been so inadequate. Psycho-therapy, as we now understand it, is the product of the scientific advance of the last few generations, not an inference from familiar experiences.

The solidarity of knowledge grows ever more apparent as the sciences multiply. Limitation of the student's range goes along with a clearer perception of the identity of method and interest which binds all students into a single cause. The specifically modern sciences—biology, anthropology, comparative religion, historical criticism—have contributed materials for a psychology which, by comparison with the old, may fairly be called new. This new psychology has placed the powerful and dangerous instrument of psycho-analysis in the physician's hands. The unity of the individual self can be deliberately broken up. The inter-relation of the physical and the psychical factors in the single life can be uncovered and revised. The mind can be bent to the service of the body, and forced to remedy the mischiefs it has caused. Psycho-analysis is an instrument which others can use beside the physicians, and the grave

question must be faced, whether they can, in the interest of the community, be suffered to use it? Ought psycho-therapy to be recognised as a branch of medical science, and, as such, held within the responsible control of trained physicians? or, can it rightly be left to the practice of amateurs, who possess neither professional training nor public certificate of competence? This broad issue is further complicated by the introduction of the religious claim involved in "spiritual healing." The standing conflict between traditional religion and modern science finds a place in the discussion, and charges it with irrelevant and exciting emotions.

Healing has played a great part in the history of religion. Disease has been closely associated with sin, and its treatment has passed almost inevitably into the hands of those who are concerned with moral issues. Disease, moreover, has never been absent from human experience, and the desire to be released from it has always been a powerful sentiment in human minds. The mystery which attaches to its onset, and to its departure, has ever turned men's minds towards supernatural powers. Disease has been interpreted religiously, and the cure of disease has

been held to express Divine activity. The favourites of heaven have been credited with healing power; and the scenes of their death and burial have absorbed and perpetuated their distinctive grace. Miraculous healing is part of the tradition of Christendom, and the *amour propre* of the Christian Church is bound up with its defence.

None the less, Christianity stands to lose by its association with miraculous healing. Historically this has been the door through which superstition has found its easiest entrance into the Church. Nor is this to be marvelled at. For miraculous healing is not a Christian phenomenon. It has for Christians no religious significance.

Within recent years much light has been thrown on the process by which Europe became Christian. The broad result of the patient labours of an enthusiastic army of scholars has been to disallow the old conception of dramatic change and to substitute the less attractive notion of gradual absorption. One phase of religious development passed into another, reflecting the emergence of new and original forces, but itself standing within the normal process. There were episodes of violence, and these had far-reaching

consequences, but they bore to the whole history the same relation as the sudden conversions of individuals bear to the total progress of ecclesiastical life. Paganism faded into Christianity by insensible degrees, as in our northern lands the night passes into the day. The Church absorbed, recast, and reproduced the Paganism which confronted it. For the real conflict of religions was not that which engaged the Apologists. The Catholic Faith had an easy victory over the attenuated theology of paganism which had been already stricken fatally by the philosophers, but the long war with the popular religion ended in something like a drawn battle. That popular religion found expression in cultus rather than in doctrine; it had its strength, as all popular religion must ever have, in the aboriginal instincts and necessities of human nature. This popular religion of the ancient world gathered, not about the great gods who were little more than intellectual figments, but about those nearer and less reputable divinities who belonged to the ancestral earth, and concerned themselves with the daily exigent needs of their worshippers. Conspicuous centres of this religion were the healing temples of Asklepios and

Amphiaraus. " Paganism made its last stand in the temples of Serapis and Asklepios, and their powers of resistance were due to the cures performed under their auspices in the name of the god." [1]

In 1881 excavations were begun at Epidaurus under the direction of M. Kavvadias, and they have brought to light the materials by which the aspect, methods, and effect of the great healing centre there connected with the worship of Asklepios can be described. The interesting volume by Mary Hamilton—*Incubation, or the Cure of Disease in Pagan Temples and Christian Churches*—brings together the relevant facts, and enables the English reader to realise how intimate is the relation between the faith-healing of Christendom and the faith-healing of the older pagan world.[2] The relation between the two systems is thus described :

> " In this struggle for supremacy over the ancient deities, the followers of

[1] *Incubation*, by Mary Hamilton, p. 109.

[2] A mass of curious information on the subject is conveniently brought together in Friedländer's *Roman Life and Manners under the Early Empire*, especially the section on " Medicine," in vol. i. pp. 167–185 ; and the chapter on " Religion," in vol. iii. pp. 84–214.

Christ met the pagans on their own ground and adopted their tactics. Temples were replaced by churches, where Christ was worshipped as the Benefactor, the Saviour, and the Healer of mankind. These became centres for health-cures, wrought by Christ through some one of His saints, whose personality varied according to the district, and miracles of healing were performed in such great numbers as to ensure the popularity of the churches.

" It is this side of Christian work which shows most clearly the influence of paganism. Many of the ancient customs were retained because they were found to be the best means to the end, but they were covered with a transparent mask of Christianity. It was no longer the deified heroes, known as chthonian gods, that were honoured as miracle-workers, but Christian saints, who had been pre-eminently virtuous men, and after death had received the semi-deification of sainthood. Still there was no great gulf between the two types of agents. The methods were so similar that we are led to regard

the saints as successors of the heathen gods." [1]

These healing shrines, of which the temple of Asklepios at Epidaurus is the best known example, benefited by the great improvement in communications which followed the extension of the Roman Empire. Patients travelled in ease and security from far and near to visit them. In making provision for their needs, vested interests on a great scale grew up, and no doubt brought into the religious system an influence which was more commercial than devout. These healing shrines played in the society of antiquity much the same rôle as that played in the society of eighteenth-century England by Bath and Tonbridge Wells. The very aspect of the pagan temples was reproduced by the Christian churches which replaced them. In both alike the memorials of cures set up by grateful beneficiaries took the same forms —pathetic, repulsive, grotesque. Then, as now, the professional physicians regarded these faith-healing centres with suspicion and dislike, for though they recognised Asklepios as their divine patron, and offered him official

[1] P. 110.

worship, they were disposed to resent his abnormal activities. "The fact is," writes Mr Rouse, "the physicians and the temple appealed to different classes of persons," and in this circumstance also we may perceive a parallel between paganism and Christianity.

> "Childish anecdotes, like the Epidaurian cures, would have been rejected by Plato or Sophocles as readily as by any educated man of to-day; such as these, and doubtless the richer citizens, with a few exceptions like Theopompus, went to the physicians. But the ordinary Greek was simple and tried the faith cure, which was at once cheaper and more in accord with ancient tradition. If we set aside the temple officials, who naturally would support the establishment, most of the dedicators' names in the lists lack the demotic adjective, which may imply that they were foreigners, or humble tradesmen, not citizens of Athens. Or the temple might be the last resort of those who could get no relief from the physicians. . . .
>
> "In this respect modern analogies are instructive. . . . There are properly-

trained doctors in every part of the Greek world; yet the people still throng to the feast of the Virgin at Teos or Ayassos and to many another shrine; the monasteries generally contain one or more families who come in hope of healing and deliverance." [1]

While the ignorant Greeks of the Levant, besotted with primitive superstition, are thus beginning to turn from their healing shrines to the light of medical science, it would seem that the opposite process is observable among ourselves. The more ecclesiastically-minded advocates of spiritual healing would reverse the movement of history, restore the long-abandoned cultus of the saints, and gather again about their ruined shrines the multitudes of afflicted folk. Psycho-therapy, decked out with medieval ceremonial, and grounded on sacramental theory, shall recover for the Church, purged at last of Protestant heresy, the prestige and popularity which it has lacked so long! After describing with loving enthusiasm the scenes of religious fervour which must have been presented by the

[1] *Greek Votive Offerings*, by W. H. D. Rouse, Cambridge, 1902, p. 206 f.

famous miracle-working shrines of medieval England, Dr Dearmer proceeds :

> " What would happen if we combined these potent influences of older times with the science and the skill of our own age—if, lifting our heads above the fond devotion to relics and legends of relics which so greatly helped our simpler forefathers, we yet bowed these proud imperfect heads of ours to pass under the temple door into a fuller presence of God ? What might not happen if we could bring our sick to holy places of rest and prayer, to centres of pilgrimage where both religion and science were at their best, to churches of deathless beauty, hallowed by worship and by sacraments, by past associations and by the present efficacy of united faith ? The rich seek in many watering-places a substitute where they find a little to help them at a high cost ; but one thing is lacking, the power of vital religion. Once our ancient great churches welcomed the poor as well as the rich, and gave them the best they had of science and of religion, set in an inspiring atmo-

> sphere of harmonious beauty that was better than anything we have to offer. Their science was in its swaddling-clothes, their religion had many imperfections; but what they had they gave; and we ought to be able to give much better, if those glorious churches which they have bequeathed to us should recover their large original intention of ministering both to the spirit and the body.[1]

The reader will notice the suggestion, as untrue as it is ungenerous, that the English cathedrals under their present guardians do *not* welcome the poor. It is of course part of the "Catholic" legend that an excessive deference to wealth within the churches was unknown before the Reformation, whereas such deference is at least as ancient as the Epistle of St James, and never reached grosser expressions than in the feudal epoch. Dr Dearmer assumes that modern science and medieval religion might enter into a working alliance, but that assumption really ignores the essential principles of both. The *Church Times* hailed the Mission of Healing in

[1] *Body and Soul*, p. 272.

Bradford as leading on to a revival of medieval methods.

> "It can clearly be seen that the authorities of the Church in the provinces of Canterbury and York must give clear direction on the subject of Charismatic healing; while the support given to the Charismatic side of healing will open to Catholics the opportunity of reviving those 'sacramentals' used by our forefathers for the alleviation of our suffering brothers of the world." [1]

It is, however, easier to revive the medieval ceremonial than to revive the ideas which that ceremonial expressed and which alone gave it significance. Apart from the ideas the former effects could not follow. The crude demonology, the childish literalism, the abject fear, the preposterous science, the debased sacramentalism, scarcely superior to the fetish-worship of Africa—these lie behind the exorcisms, unctions, and benedictions of the Church in the early centuries and in the Middle Ages. Can these be restored? Human nature is strangely ductile: and we have witnessed an amazing recrudescence of medievalism in the ecclesiastical world. It

[1] *Church Times*, 17th October 1924.

is certainly not impossible that, within the limited range of clerical influence, there might be such a revival of medieval mentality as would make possible in the twentieth century the distinctive features of medieval religion.

Would humanity be the gainer if Dr Dearmer's dream of a modernised medievalism came true and psycho-therapy was included in the normal activities of the Christian ministry ? Would the sum of physical misery be substantially reduced if churches replaced hospitals as centres of healing ? Mr Hickson (who represents a more popular type of " spiritual " healing than Dr Dearmer) evidently thinks that the rise of the medical profession into a practical monopoly of healing has involved grievous injury to mankind. " The advance of science," he writes, " has not appreciably lessened the amount or intensity of pain and affliction." [1] He denounces the Church even fiercely for leaving unused a healing gift which might purge the world of its pain. It was, he says, " a day of calamity for suffering humanity " when the Church abandoned the ministry of healing. But he is mistaken. No contrast between

[1] " Foreword " to *The Sacrament of Healing*, by John Maillard.

the present and the past is more extreme than that which leaps to the eyes when the medical resources of our time are compared with those existing in all former ages. I need not elaborate a statement which none will challenge. The remarkable decline in the death-rate is the achievement of science applied intelligently to life, not the triumph of a wonder-working church.[1] When miracles of healing were most numerous, public health was least satisfactory. The leper hospitals which formed a conspicuous feature of mediæval society, and still survive in many places, are monuments of the repulsive disease which abounded in the "Ages of Faith," and has vanished before modern science. It is a question whether the cures wrought by faith at the shrines outbalanced the epidemics of disease which the accumulation of the sick occasioned. The much-advertised miracles of healing, which accompanied Mr Hickson's progress round the world, pass into oblivion, and leave the sum of human distress unlessened. Surely the medical missions, which

[1] In this connection a favourite saying of Huxley may be quoted: "Science offers us much greater marvels than the miracles of theology: only the evidence for them is very different." *Life*, iii. p. 189.

now form so prominent and so valuable a feature in the evangelistic effort of the Church, indicate a far worthier conception of the healing ministry of Christ. That ministry is to be traced, not in the sporadic prodigies of faith-healing, but in the majestic and unfaltering movement of medical science out of its confusing associations with magic and rudimentary religion into its present altitude, when it challenges with waxing confidence every malady which afflicts mankind, and brings its comfort on the wings of Christian charity to the poorest and most necessitous of the sick. It cannot be the interest of mankind that the march of science should be arrested, and the treatment of physical disease be carried back into the half light of devotional experiment. It cannot be the duty of the Church deliberately to return to the beliefs and methods of a primitive and superstitious past. Rather should the disciples of the Truth Incarnate follow the evident leading of the Spirit of Truth, support the patient labours of scientific men, welcome and apply the knowledge which they gain, and thus, in humble obedience to the Creator's laws, rescue humanity, so far as may be possible, from the physical distresses which shadow its earthly lot.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUAL HEALING

The Lambeth Conference (1920) adopted a series of resolutions bearing on the Church's concern with physical healing. It cannot be said that these resolutions throw much light on the subject, but the deliberate pronouncements of the assembled leaders of the Anglican Communion have an importance which few will challenge, and, if they give little guidance, they do certainly disclose the tendency of opinion within the churches which the bishops assembled at Lambeth represented. The vagueness and obscurity of the language employed might be held to indicate rather an extreme confusion of mind than a clear perception of the Church's duty. At least the passing of resolutions on the subject showed that the bishops were aware of the interest which it has aroused, and realised the strength of the drift to which they yielded. After deliberately condemning Christian Science

as irreconcilable with "the fundamental truths of the Christian faith and the teaching of Scripture on atonement, penitence, forgiveness, and fellowship in the sufferings of Christ," the Conference passed to the general subject of healing, and expressed its judgment thus :

> "The Conference reminds the Church that intimate communion with God has been the privilege and joy of the saints in every age. This communion, realised in union with Christ through the Holy Spirit, influences the whole personality of man, physical and spiritual, *enabling him to share his Lord's triumph over sin, disease, and death.*"

We have italicised the crucial sentence. What does it really mean ? How can the Christian "share his Lord's triumph over sin, disease, and death ?" The mere grouping of these together is significant and perplexing. Sin is always the fault of a responsible sinner : disease may be, and generally is, the misfortune of the diseased : death is the physical experience common to all men. How then can they be thus grouped together ? "*Sin is lawlessness,*" says St John with

characteristic terseness. To " conquer sin " is to re-establish the authority of the moral law in human life. By His atoning death on the cross Jesus Christ reconciled man to God, and gave to all His true disciples the power to overcome sin in themselves. In that sense they may truly be said to " share His triumph over sin." By His resurrection Jesus Christ " *brought life and immortality to light*," broke the empire of death, and, as the representative of redeemed humanity, revealed its immortal destiny. He " opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers," gave them, even under the conditions of time and place, the " *powers of the world to come*," and, in a true sense, made them sharers of His triumph over death. So far there is no dispute. We are on familiar ground, and use a language intelligible enough to all Christians : but when from sin and death we pass to disease, we are immersed in a great dubiety. In what sense can it be said of Christians that they share Christ's triumph over *disease* ? While it is indisputable that Christians, in proportion to the sincerity of their discipleship, do overcome sin, and by slow and advancing degrees do draw nearer to that moral ideal enshrined in the Gospels which

St Paul describes as "*the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*," so that the type of human character which is apparently and distinctively Christian has become common in Christendom, and is easily recognised in all varieties of secular condition; and while it is certain that all Christians profess their belief in ultimate resurrection to the life everlasting, there is not the slightest reason for thinking that Christians as such enjoy immunity from disease, nor yet that the most eminent degree of sanctity ensures any release from the physical defects and disadvantages which men inherit from their ancestors. What is meant by Christ's triumph over disease? We do not know whether our Lord Himself was ever ill. The conception of Him as a type of physical beauty "*fairer than the children of men*" does not appear to have been the earliest in point of time: and the only certain thing is that the Church has never possessed an authoritative portrait of its Founder. It would, perhaps, seem most natural to suppose that as He "*was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin*," so in a literal sense He took His share of this burden of physical disease which belongs to us. There has been a conflict in the Church

between the ascetic and the theological conceptions of the Incarnate. It is the historic reality which alone concerns us here, and for that we have no sufficient evidence. What is meant, then, by Christ's triumph over disease? In its 61st Resolution the Lambeth Conference speaks darkly of "the power of Christ to heal" being "released" through the effort and discipline of the clergy and "the corporate faith of the Church":

> "We therefore urge upon the clergy of the Anglican Communion the duty of a more thorough study of the many-sided enterprise of prayer in order that they may become more efficient teachers and trainers of their people in this work, so that through the daily practice of prayer and meditation the corporate faith of the Church may be renewed, and the fruit of the Spirit may be more manifest in the daily lives of professing Christians *and the power of Christ to heal may be released.*"

Again we italicise the crucial sentence, and we ask what it means. What will be the practical effect of thus "releasing" the

power of Christ to heal? It is obviously impossible without profanity to imagine any limits to the *power* of the Incarnate, save such as are implicit in Incarnation, and His *Will* to heal is sufficiently disclosed by the fact that He heals at all. The Lambeth Fathers are careful to repudiate the not unnatural supposition that they have indicated a healing method which renders the patient labours of medical science superfluous:

> "We declare our thankfulness for the devoted labours of those engaged in scientific research and for the progress made in medicine, surgery, nursing, hygiene, and sanitation. Believing that all these means of healing and preventing disease and removing suffering are gifts that come from God, *we acknowledge our duty to use them faithfully for the welfare of mankind.*"

But what does such faithful use of medical science imply? What is the right relation between the "healing power of Christ" released by the prayers and discipline of the clergy and the corporate faith of the Church on the one hand, and the healing power of the physicians on the other? Do they cover

the same ground, so that there is an option before the sick man ? Or, have they separate spheres of efficacy ? And, if so, how are these spheres delimited ? How shall the dutiful Christian seeking relief from physical disease escape being impaled on one or the other horn of a formidable dilemma, either a sinful neglect of Christ's healing power in the hands of the clergy, or a presumptuous disregard of the healing power in the hands of the physicians ? If both methods of physical healing are accessible to the afflicted man, on what principle is he to choose between them ? Disease is both distressing and expensive. The clergy may, or may not, be as efficient as the physician ; they are probably cheaper, and cheapness is a consideration which has an importance of its own, and may well deflect the scales of a private judgment which is linked to an empty purse.

The notion of " spiritual healing " which seems to be implicit in the Lambeth resolutions is the subject of an attractively-written volume by the Rev. Harold Anson, M.A., Chairman of the Guild of Health (London), who for many years has interested himself in the subject. It is entitled *Spiritual Healing :*

a Discussion of the Religious Element in Physical Health, and merits careful examination.

Mr Anson is a candid but not very coherent thinker. He has great facility of expression, which perhaps is not always sufficiently balanced by lucidity of thought, so that sometimes he seems to mislead himself (and perhaps also his readers) by the illustrations with which he relieves his argument. He is evidently anxious to propitiate the doctors, and he dislikes the tone and temper of the popular faith-healers, from whom he desires to separate himself as sharply as the circumstances permit. But he seems to oscillate between surprising surrenders to crude superstition and sudden reactions of alarmed intelligence. He has, however, written an interesting and informing book, which no student of "spiritual healing" can wisely ignore.

It is essential to his whole position that the physical healing which he promises shall be held to its spiritual context, in which it holds a relatively subordinate position, so subordinate in fact that the suspicion sometimes crosses the reader's mind that it could be omitted altogether without any grave injury to the argument. He begins by laying

down a theological foundation. More than half the volume is taken up with an exposition of Christian doctrine, which perhaps is more orthodox in phrase and purpose than in substance. In any case, it is too vague to satisfy the theologian, and too definite to content "the man in the street." It leads up to a chapter on "Spiritual Healing in Practice," in which we arrive at the main question.

Disease is assumed to be contrary to the Will of God. If we are living in harmony with that Will, we shall be immune from disease: no doubt, perfect harmony is not accessible to most of us, and therefore even in the case of good Christians disease has a hold, but every approach to harmony brings a measure of immunity, and there is no limit to our capacity for perfectness of health as well physical as spiritual. "Spiritual healing rests on the belief that all men are intended to develop towards a standard of perfection which is ultimately attainable, and that they cannot be said to be in perfect health until they have attained that standard." [1] There is, then, in illness a definitely religious factor, and it is the primary concern of the "spiritual

[1] P. 79.

healer " to discover and remedy whatever is wrong with that. This factor may sometimes—as in such a purely physical case as an amputation or the extraction of a tooth—be very subordinate, still it is always there :

> " But though there may be some cases in which the religious factor may seem to be of comparatively minor importance, in the great majority of cases of illnesses the religious factor is of the utmost importance, and numberless people are to-day ill, and numberless people are receiving medical attention, and with little result, for no other reason than that there is no one who is able to give them adequate religious help, and many people are leaving the organised churches because there seems to be no hope of such treatment being given them within their own church." [1]

It is not easy to place a precise meaning on this language. Mr Anson means by " the religious factor " two quite different things, which he fails to distinguish. Sometimes, as in the case of tooth-extraction, he means nothing more than " the building up of

[1] P. 114.

character through religion"; that is, the moral invigoration which comes from bearing physical pain with fortitude and resignation. Sometimes he means a cause of the illness which has to be discovered by questioning or analysis—a moral fault, or a false religious belief, or some buried secret of the subconscious self. No one, of course, will quarrel with the first sense. There is a definitely religious factor in all human experiences in this sense that all, if endured with fortitude and interpreted with intelligence, can build up character; but this is very different from their being all in such sense religious, that by religious means they can be averted, relieved, or reversed. That physical distress carries always the potency of moral advantage to the distressed individual is, of course, the assumption of all discipline. What the apostle says of persecution may be said of illness: "*All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness.*" It is in connection with the second sense that Mr Anson develops his theory of spiritual healing, and describes his method.

He insists, in the first place, on "some

real analysis of the patient's state in the sight of God, undertaken by the patient himself if he is able to do it, or with the help of the spiritual healer if he is not." Confession and direction have been much debated in connection with their effects on the penitent's character; here they are urged as invaluable auxiliaries to his bodily health. But in thus enlarging the purpose of the discipline, the door is opened for other dangers than those which the critics of the Confessional, from Pascal downwards, have pointed out. The priest may be an incompetent psychologist, yet, if his place be taken by a trained layman, the hapless penitent may be in even worse case. Nevertheless, we are assured that "confession, and the assurance of absolution, whatever form this may take, is a very real requisite in many cases for a complete spiritual healing, and it needs to be followed by skilled spiritual direction." [1]

Religion carries with it a "special kind of suggestion" which is of great curative efficacy.

> "Those who really believe that God knows all their needs, and that, as they

[1] P. 116.

were created in love, so their ultimate purpose and destiny is to be united to the eternal love of God, have in that belief a tremendous and powerful basis for the practice of suggestion. In giving this suggestive treatment, we can place those who come to us in a position in which their body is quiet and relaxed (which is by no means the case in those attitudes which are usually recommended for devotion); and when the sufferer is in a position thus receptive, uncritical, and peaceful, we may quietly recall to him, in a series of affirmations (drawn probably from the Bible—which is the best source of all suggestion), those truths in which he himself believes and which are familiar to him through a religious education. The quiet affirmation of these beliefs drawn either from the words of our Lord or from some such source as the twenty-third Psalm, quietly repeated while the patient is thus receptive, have very great healing value. I have known them to reduce temperature, to bring about peaceful sleep, to do away with delirium, more quickly than any physical process. There are other people to whom

this kind of suggestion is not helpful, who find far greater help through the rites and sacraments of the Church; and many people who desire both. The Anointing of the sick, one of the most ancient and suggestive ceremonies of Christianity, or the Holy Communion used especially with the intention of bodily and mental wholeness, or the laying on of hands, is a very valuable means, especially for those persons to whom sacramental acts are more real than affirmations and acts of faith. I have known immediate physical results of an astonishing kind follow upon this use of the Sacraments where all other means had failed. The patient will gradually be taught, if the illness is a long one, to use the affirmations and acts of faith for himself." [1]

We have quoted at some length in order to give a just impression of Mr Anson's method. What, it must be asked, is the attitude towards Christianity which this method of healing appears to imply? It must be answered that the religion is frankly subor-

[1] Pp. 117, 118.

dinated to the object of effecting a cure. It is, in fact, as completely adapted to the patient's morbid condition as the doctor's drugs, for the religious suggestion is determined by the patient's conception of religion. The Bible, Unction, Laying on of Hands, even the Holy Eucharist—all are instruments of curative suggestion, and may be used as such. If it be urged that such correlation of the particular suggestion and the patient's distinctive mentality is indispensable, being in fact involved in the very notion of psycho-therapy, it must be answered that *precisely for that reason* religion cannot rightly be used as a suggestive instrument. For religion, as Christians have been taught to understand it, is inseparable from truth: and therefore any treatment of religion which tends to sever it from the truth, and to bind it up with falsehood, is essentially wrong. It is a poor thing to cure the body by debasing the mind, yet nothing else may be the effect of bending religion unwarrantably to the purpose of physical healing. Reason and charity indeed unite to require and to justify an economy in the application of religion to the infinitely various conditions of individual life. Ignorance, immaturity, bodily infirmity

have claims to special treatment which cannot be disputed. There is a sphere within which reserve must be practised by the teacher, and innocent illusion condoned by the pastor. But always the interest of truth is paramount. No reserve is lawful, and no illusion may be indulged, if either conflicts with that supreme interest. Applying this rule to the case of "spiritual healing," can it be seriously maintained that the methods of religious suggestion described by Mr Anson would serve the interest of religious truth; that is, of true religion? Would not the inevitable result of their use be the enfeebling of the patient's intelligence and the building up in his mind of grossly superstitious conceptions of religion? Take the crucial instance of the Holy Communion "used especially with the intention of bodily and mental wholeness." Such an intention, if it mean no more than receiving the Sacrament in order that we may be the better fitted for the service of God in all the mingled contacts and activities of the world's life, is, it may be thought, involved in every rightful reception; but when given a specific application to the case of a sick man, and used as a suggestion of physical healing, it has another aspect

altogether. Mr Anson says that he has known "immediate physical results of an astonishing kind follow upon this use of the Sacraments." We need not doubt his statement. As much may be said for the Bambino which is carried to the sick in Rome, and for precisely the same reason. The consecrated elements and the Italian Image have been brought down to the same level, and are being used in the same way. Both effect cures by suggestion, which in this connection we call faith. If this were all, the immediate physical benefit might reconcile us to the dubious procedure. But it is not all. Such treatment of the Sacrament implies a doctrine which will carry far. Canon Robinson thinks that if the Holy Communion were definitely associated with bodily health, we should hear no more complaints about the "small attendance at the weekly or daily Eucharist." He may well be right; but the new popularity of the Sacrament will have been dearly purchased if the price to be paid be the degradation of Christianity to the level of primitive superstition.

Mr Anson does not conceal the formidable extent of the religious innovation which "spiritual healing" involves. He is con-

cerned with much more than organising a "ministry of healing." He aspires to recast the theology of the Church and to build his teaching on a confessedly novel version of the Gospel. In his view the whole traditional system of Christian teaching is inspired by a misreading of the original Gospel, of which it is, in fact, no better than a harsh perversion. He calls upon the Church to facilitate the work of the healers by a drastic expurgation of its formularies. It must remove from them "all those phrases and sentiments which have a thoroughly bad suggestive value"; that is, everything which expresses the sterner aspects of Christ's religion—its rigorous insistence on rightness of motive, its horror of sin, its doctrine of judgment, and "the fear of God." "We must remember," he says, "that Christ taught us to think of God in accordance with our thought about the best earthly fathers and mothers." [1] Is this, then, the whole of His teaching about God? Did He not come in the succession of the Prophets, and sanction, while He completed, their spiritual witness? In understanding Christianity are we to ignore the Apostolic version of it expressed in the

[1] P. 121.

Epistles? The formularies of the Prayer Book were not compiled for the specific needs of invalids, but for the use of normal Christians. Fear has its place, an important place, in the scheme of the Christian life; and every presentation of Christianity from which its sterner elements have been cut out is stricken with moral weakness.

Mr Anson is rather scornful of those who have recourse to "spiritual healing" with the dominant purpose of being cured of the illness which afflicts them:

> "If we are only, or mainly, concerned with physical health we shall probably get quite as good results from auto-suggestion as from 'spiritual healing'; and some of the events which have seemed most miraculous, and have been to many people the clearest proof of their Divine origin, will be shown to be exemplifications of natural law." [1]

Nor will he make any definite promise of physical benefit even to those who have recourse to "spiritual healing" with the best motives. Physical cure may, or may not, be effected, but spiritual healing will be

[1] P. 45.

none the less a fact, since the uncured disease may be made the means of moral and spiritual advance. He does not seem to contemplate the possibility of the physical failure inducing also a failure of faith; yet who that knows anything of human nature, and of the terrible intensity of desire which even the smallest prospect of relief can stir in a sick man's mind, will doubt that this is far the more probable consequence of the two? The Lambeth Conference Committee (1924) made the spiritual improvement of the patient the distinctive mark of "spiritual healing":

> "When real spiritual treatment has been used we claim that not merely is the disease healed or alleviated but the whole nature of the patient raised to a higher level. In other words, in spiritual healing the healing of the spirit is primary, the healing of the body secondary."

This does not carry us far. The most familiar of pastoral experiences is the spectacle of moral and spiritual improvement accompanying recovery from illness. It is not always the case that the good resolutions formed on the bed of sickness are forgotten when health

has returned. "*It is good for me that I have been in trouble that I may learn thy statutes,*" writes the Psalmist, thankfully recognising the spiritual gain which had come to him through his distress. If "spiritual healing" means no more than healing which has been accompanied by moral improvement, it may describe the cures effected by "material" and "psychic" agencies as well as those effected by "devotional and sacramental" means.

The question is one of physical healing, not of the healer's intentions or the patient's character. The only effect of confusing the issue by introducing "ultimate ends" and "moral and spiritual consequences" is to make it impossible to bring the claim of the spiritual healer to the test of experience. We cannot read men's minds, or register precisely their spiritual condition, but we can diagnose disease and recognise cure.

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CHAPTER III

LOURDES

No discussion of "spiritual healing" can omit a reference to the most famous of its modern centres.[1] For some sixty years this little Pyrenean town has been the scene of amazing cures at the spring discovered in 1858 by the peasant girl Bernadette Soubirous. Near the grotto there is an inscription upon marble which commemorates the dates and utterances of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin. It runs thus :

> "Dates of the eighteen apparitions and words of the Blessed Virgin in the

[1] This chapter is based on the following books :— Huysmans' *The Crowds of Lourdes*, R. H. Benson's *Lourdes*, Oxenham's *The Wonder of Lourdes*, Thurston's article "Lourdes" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia*, and on the more or less detailed accounts in books by Salmon, Pannell, Dearmer, Cobb, and Newbolt. The scientific view is stated in the *British Medical Journal*, 18th June 1910. Zola's well-known novel, *Lourdes*, is written with the photographic fidelity to fact which always marked the author's realism.

year of grace 1858. In the hollow of the rock, where the statue is now seen, the Blessed Virgin appeared to Bernadette Soubirous eighteen times—the 11th and the 14th of February, each day with two exceptions from 18th February until 4th March, and on 25th March, 7th April, and 16th July. The Blessed Virgin said to the child on 18th February: 'Will you do me the favour of coming here daily for a fortnight?' 'I do not promise to make you happy in this world but in the next.' 'I want many people to come.' The Virgin said to her during the fortnight: 'You will pray for sinners, you will kiss the earth for sinners. Penitence, Penitence, Penitence.' 'Go tell the priests to cause a chapel to be built.' 'I want people to come here in procession.' 'Go and drink of the fountain and wash yourself in it.' 'Go and eat of that grass which is there.' On 25th March the Virgin said: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.'"

The final utterance carries us at once into the sphere of theological controversy, a controversy, moreover, which at the time

was fresh in the minds of Roman Catholics. Only four years had passed since Pius IX had promulgated the bull *Ineffabilis* (8th December 1854) in which a question which had agitated the Church for centuries was formally decided against the teaching of Scripture and the universal belief of the Church during the greater part of its history. The new doctrine was thus defined by the Sovereign Pontiff :

> " We declare, pronounce, and define that the doctrine which holds that the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first instant of her conception, was, by a most singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, preserved from all stain of original sin, is a doctrine revealed by God, and therefore to be steadfastly believed by all the faithful."

The new doctrine, thus authoritatively certified to be an integral part of the Christian faith, had first been heard of in the 12th century, and had provoked weighty and protracted protests. The greatest of the schoolmen, including St Thomas Aquinas

himself, discussed and refuted it. But it accorded with popular sentiment, and was adopted with passionate zeal by the Franciscans. In process of time the Papacy succumbed to the movement from below, and Pius IX did but complete the surrender of authority to the superstition of the rank and file. It is impossible to dissociate the peasant girl's account of the Virgin's utterance from the grand theological interest of the time. The apparitions, however explained, would have had no permanent importance had they not led to the discovery of the healing spring which is now the magnet of a vast concourse of pilgrims from every part of the world. We are assured that at the time of Bernadette's visions no one suspected that the spring existed. It first appeared as a tiny trickle, but its volume rapidly increased, and it now yields as much as 27,000 gallons a day. As soon as the apparitions were noised abroad, pilgrims began to gather to the spot, and no long time elapsed before miracles of healing were reported. Lourdes became interesting to the religious public. The authorities, as well ecclesiastical as civil, were at first by no means eager to encourage the development of a new cultus of the

Virgin. Bernadette was subjected to severe and protracted questioning, from which she emerged with unshaken credit. "The evidence of the cures that had taken place eventually bore down official opposition, and in January 1862 the Bishop of Tarbes, acting upon the advice of the Commission which he had appointed, issued a decree declaring that 'the apparitions (of the Blessed Virgin) have all the characteristics of truth and that the faithful are justified in believing them to be true.' Since then further ecclesiastical approbation has been given both to the apparitions and to the miracles of Lourdes in many ways, both direct and indirect, by the authority of the Holy See." [1]

Lourdes has grown in repute until it has become the most renowned of all the Virgin's shrines. Every year it is said that not less than 150,000 pilgrims resort thither seeking benefit to soul or body. In the course of sixty years many cures of an astonishing character have been effected. The utmost publicity has prevailed. The ecclesiastical authorities have courted inquiry and organ-

[1] Article "Lourdes," by Herbert Thurston, S.J., in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.*

ised a system of investigation which has won the approval of disinterested observers. Critics and apologists have been numerous, and a whole literature—hostile, favourable, neutral—has come into existence. No obscurity attaches to the relevant facts. Controversy involves no imputations of ill faith. The only issue at stake is one of interpretation. What is the true significance of the marvellous cures? Are they to be referred to natural causes, known or unknown? Or, must they be rather assigned to a supernatural cause? Are they miracles, or ordinary cases of faith-healing, explicable as the product of suggestion?

There are some considerations of importance which ought to affect the interpretation of the facts.

I. Lourdes is historically the last and most distinguished of a series of healing centres connected with the cultus of the Blessed Virgin in that part of France. "The precedents of Lourdes in the region of the Pyrenees are numerous. If you take a map of the dioceses of Bayonne and Tarbes you can draw a circle round Lourdes with the hamlets and chapels which were formerly centres for pilgrimages of our Lady; and then Lourdes

will appear in the middle of the ring as a living planet surrounded with nine satellites wellnigh dead." M. Huysmans speculates on the reasons which must have led the Madonna thus to transfer her favours from one place to another, and he concludes that they were dogmatic as well as benevolent :

> " It must not be forgotten, indeed, that if Mary came to Lourdes to call sinners to do penance and by her cures to confirm the mediatory power of her grace, She came also and above all to bear witness that She was that ' Immaculate Conception ' which had been defined as a dogma four years previously by Pope Pius IX, in Rome.
>
> " Now, in her previous apparitions in the Pyrenees, there had never been any question of this prerogative, of which She had never herself spoken before 1830, when She recalled it to one of the forerunners of Bernadette, to Catherine Labouré, in Paris.
>
> " Thus, it was in this city that She first spoke to a human being of the inviolability of her birth." [1]

[1] *The Crowds of Lourdes*, p. 11.

It cannot be denied that the inevitable effect of the apparitions and miracles was to authenticate the new doctrine. What Protestants call Mariolatry, and repudiate as a pernicious corruption of Christ's religion, has its citadel in Lourdes. In the ecstatic language of Father Benson, "Lourdes is soaked, saturated, and kindled by the all but sensible presence of the Mother of God." He describes the effect which his visit to Lourdes had upon himself. His words are worth quoting if only for the light which they cast upon the mentality of modern Roman Catholics. He tells us that "it was borne in upon him what a mutilated Christianity that is which takes no account of Mary." He "understood how puzzling it must be for 'old Catholics,' to whom Mary is as real and active as her Divine Son, to understand the sincerity of those to whom she is no more than a phantom, and who yet profess and call themselves Christians." He found nutriment for his faith even in the puzzling fact that of the vast multitudes of supplicants for the Mighty and Merciful Virgin's help all but a tiny fraction went away from her shrine unhelped :

"Mary, then, has appeared to me in a new light since I have visited Lourdes. I shall in future not only hate to offend her, but fear it also. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of that Mother who allows the broken sufferer to crawl across France to her feet—and then to crawl back again. She is one of the Maries of Chartres that reveals herself here, dark, mighty, dominant, and all but inexorable; not the Mary of an ecclesiastical shop, who dwells amid tinsel and tuberoses. . . . The whole place is alive with Mary and the love of God—from the inadequate statue at the Grotto to the brazen garlands in the square, even as far as the illuminated castle and the rockets that burst and bang against the steady stars. If I were sick of some deadly disease, and it were revealed to me that I must die, yet none the less I should go to Lourdes; for if I should not be healed by Mary, I could at least learn how to suffer as a Christian ought. God has chosen this place—He only knows why, as He, too, alone chooses which man shall suffer and which be glad—He has chosen this place to

show His power; and therefore has sent His Mother there, that we may look through her to Him." [1]

Father Benson, brought up in a devout Anglican family and religious from his cradle, and M. Huysmans, a typical French *littérateur* steeped in the scepticism and license of anti-clericalism, were both converts, and both were profoundly attracted by the very features of the modern Roman system which are least rational and most remote from the teaching and temper of Apostolic Christianity. Both use a language, ecstatic, rhetorical, materialistic, which seems the outcome, not of intelligent piety, but of an almost crazy devotion. As we read it, we can see clearly the nature of the influence which Lourdes has exercised on Roman Christianity, and we cannot but consider the theory of miraculous healing at the shrine of the Immaculate Conception in connection with that influence.

If the New Testament be the norm of Christian truth, and if the earliest ages of Christian history bear the most trustworthy witness to Christian belief, then the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is a false

[1] *Lourdes*, p. 79 f.

doctrine, and the type of devotion which it expresses and stimulates is unsound. Can we reverently attribute to Almighty God miracles which authenticate the error and stimulate the devotion? "*He that is of God doeth the works of God.*" If the inevitable consequence of the miracles of Lourdes be thus evil, then those miracles are shown to have some other origin than Divine action. Miracles disclose their origin by their quality and by their effect. They may proceed from below, not from above. "*The worship of Satan*" is connected by St Paul "*with all power and signs and lying wonders*" (2 Thess. ii. 9); and Jesus Himself is said to have warned His disciples against "*false Christs and false prophets*" whose wonder-working power might "*lead astray, if possible, even the elect*" (St Matt. xxiv. 24). Can we really believe that the Almighty would emerge from the mysterious seclusion in which He veils His Providence, in order to work marvels which could not but have the effect of making it more than ever difficult for His creatures to escape the toils of falsehood? Bishop Westcott's argument that there must be "a moral correspondence between the miracles and the Being to whose action they are

assigned "[1] surely extends to inevitable consequences as well as to immediate purpose. On the view that "spiritual healing" is neither more nor less than mental healing, and as such exhibits the working of some obscure law of human nature which operates over the whole area of human life, considerations of quality and effect are irrelevant; but on the view that these phenomena are special and supernatural interventions of Divine power, and must needs bear therefore a solemn religious character, they are equally relevant and formidable. Of all such miraculous procedures Christianity may say, "*Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis.*"

The miraculous activity of the Immaculately-conceived Virgin, it is urged, must not be perceived only in the cures worked at her shrine, but in the amazing immunity from disease which the crowds of supplicants enjoy, and in the noble displays of Christian charity which they exhibit. M. Huysmans speaks of this combination of contempt for all hygienic precautions and freedom from

[1] *The Gospel of Life*, p. 210. *Cf.* Dr Murray's excellent essay on "The Spiritual and Historical Evidence for Miracles," in *Cambridge Theological Essays*, especially p. 317 f.

ill consequences as " the perpetual miracle of Lourdes " :

> " Antiseptic dressings, made so much of in surgery, are here simply replaced by compresses of Lourdes water, and sores are none the worse for it. Never were such slights inflicted upon hygiene and never was medical science so flouted. Yet here neither occurs infection, nor is any disease aggravated even if it be not cured ; and such exemption also extends to the hospital, in which the bedridden hardly ever die, although they have been worn out by the fatigue of the journey and arrive in an almost dying condition. . . . If you have no belief in Divine intervention, how can you explain such an assured impunity as is only to be found at Lourdes and as long as you remain within the zone protected by the Virgin ? " [1]

It must, however, be remembered that no device for working up enthusiasm is left unused at Lourdes : that everything proceeds in an atmosphere of tense emotion : that " mass suggestion " is organised with consum-

[1] *The Crowds of Lourdes*, p. 49.

mate skill. As one reads descriptions of the Procession or the Blessing of the Sick it is impossible to escape the impression of a frenzied passion, such as the devotees of the Great Mother exhibited in antiquity and the enthusiasts of India exhibit to-day.

If there be any prophylactic power in intense excitement, that power is operative in fullest energy at Lourdes. Father Benson's description emphasises the almost delirious fervour of the expectant multitudes, who have been worked up to frenzies of faith by the passionate appeals of the priests and by the incessant singing of litanies. "I never heard such passion in my life," he says, of the Blessing of the Sick. In these circumstances there is no need to have recourse to miracle for the explanation of what is in truth a very familiar phenomenon—the power of excitement and fanaticism to give immunity from infection.

As to the touching displays of charity which are witnessed at Lourdes—the selfless affection of wives and mothers, the disciplined labour of nurses and stretcher-bearers, the freely rendered service of nuns, priests, and doctors, these are indeed truly admirable, but can it be thought that they are dis-

tinctive of Lourdes ? No doubt the spectacle of so much suffering ministered to by so much unselfish devotion is infinitely moving. We may and ought to recognise in it the very hall-mark of Heaven on human nature, seen there most clearly where all else human is most hopeless and least attractive. But is this spectacle limited to Lourdes ? Is it not the Witness of God in human life wherever human life is touched by the Spirit of Jesus ? No error or ignorance can wholly arrest the Divine activity of the Holy Ghost. No special significance attaches to the display of Christian charity in the Lourdes pilgrims.

II. The pilgrims are very many, but the cures are very few. " So far as I can judge," writes Dr Butlin, " the results, whether estimated in quantity or quality, are cruelly inadequate." [1] If the cures, though so few and for the most part so unimportant, were granted to the most saintly, or the most necessitous of the pilgrims, they would be more easily accepted as Divine works; but, in point of fact, the healings at Lourdes have no relation either to goodness or to need. Yet we are bidden to regard them as the products of the Virgin's tender concern for

[1] *British Medical Journal*, 18th June 1910.

the woes of mankind and the proofs of her superhuman power. Why, we cannot but ask, is her benevolent activity so narrowly restricted and so capriciously exerted? It is indeed argued that the extreme arbitrariness with which the Queen of Heaven distributes her favours disproves the sceptical notion that the cures can fairly be attributed to any quality in the patient, faith or suggestibility. But surely this were to create a more intractable problem than it solves. For Divine grace is ever morally conditioned: and any suggestion of favouritism in Divine action is offensive to the Christian conscience. At Lourdes there is an "off-chance" of cure, no more. "It is certain that a modern hospital which could not make a better showing would not be able to live if it depended on its success for its voluntary contributions."[1] There is the fascinating excitement of a gamble about the Virgin's healing shrine. The believing saint goes away unhelped: the doubter and the unbeliever may be cured. Children, too young to understand or believe, are often healed: the most desperately necessitous supplicants

[1] Dr Butlin, in *British Medical Journal*, 18th June 1910.

gain nothing from their weary pilgrimage and passionate appeals. "The truth is that there is no set rule; but that the Virgin cures whomsoever, wheresoever, and howsoever she wills" is the piously restrained conclusion of M. Huysmans.

It has been suggested that, though the specific boons which were sought with such ardour of supplication were refused, the Virgin rewarded the believer by spiritual blessings which more than made amends for the disappointment of hope. Did not the Apostle pray unavailingly for relief from "*the thorn in the flesh*"? And was not his prayer abundantly rewarded, though otherwise than he had desired, by the clearer understanding of God's prevailing grace which he received? This is a familiar, perhaps an indispensable, method of reconciling the failure of petition with the plenitude of Divine promise: but is it properly relevant to the case of Lourdes? How shall the soundness of the supernatural claim be brought to the proof if, whenever the physical boon is refused, a spiritual alternative may be assumed? For it is only the physical which can come within our cognisance and testing. And how shall such non-moral eccentricity as marks the Virgin's

action at Lourdes be harmonised with the unfaltering regularity of the Divine method in Nature? For whatever dubiety may attach to the way of God in that invisible sphere of the spirit (where, as was finely said by Martineau, the proverbial order is reversed, and it is no more man that proposes and God who disposes, but God who proposes and man who disposes), in the physical universe, as it has been revealed to us by modern science, there is verily a "Reign of Law"; that is, an order so unvarying that its constancy is the indispensable and secure assumption of knowledge. In these fitful displays of the marvellous, which kindle the fervour of the crowds of Lourdes, we cannot recognise the action of Him "*with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.*"

III. If the achievements of supernatural power are so disappointing, what can be said for the method and scene of their exercise? Do they assist the reflecting and observant Christian to admit the claim which is based on them? Lourdes has become a highly organised business in which vast profits are made. The Church reaps great wealth from the offerings of the pilgrims: the shop-

keepers and hotel-proprietors wax fat on the sale of pious trinkets and the entertainment of countless visitors. The Temple market in Jerusalem, which Jesus purged with holy violence and words of terrible condemnation, is reproduced at Lourdes. While tawdry ostentation and a brazen vulgarity offend the visitor's good taste, the voracity of the money-making hurts his conscience. M. Huysmans was both a man of culture and a devotee. Here is his description of Lourdes :

> " Luxurious shop - windows, various kinds of groceries, first-class confectioners have now replaced on the ground floors along the streets the poor dwellings in which the passer-by used to see old women in spectacles sitting at work in the window-frames. The countrymen are now hotel-keepers and sellers of wax-candles, and their wives have changed into fine ladies who parade in startling dress on Sundays. They live at their ease, and without the least trouble they might realise ample fortunes, if the rage for display and the certainty that the fleecing of pilgrims will go on for ever

did not spur them on into spending even more than they get.

"If the Virgin were to abandon the grotto to-morrow, all these people who have erected sumptuous hotels would succumb beneath the burden of debt, and it would mean the selling up of all the dealers in the devotional line, and the general bankruptcy of Lourdes.

"As for their religion, if you would gauge its true value, it would have to stop bringing in profits. It may all be summed up in the remark of one who lived among them and knew them well: 'Human respect is turned upside down in this place.' In Paris, for fear of being pointed out, men hide in order to do their Easter duties; at Lourdes you find just the opposite; men do them openly to escape being noticed, and of course never go to church again afterwards. I fear that such religion may be only part of the window-dressing of the devotional bazaars; it helps, in any case, to hook purchasers; it contributes towards the increase of cash sales." [1]

[1] *The Crowds of Lourdes*, p. 186.

This is rhetorical and exaggerated, but it is also unpleasantly suggestive. It is not in such a setting that the fresh revelation of God, overriding the order of His world and challenging the homage of mankind, would naturally be looked for. We must not, of course, forget that the insolence of hypocrisy oversteps all limits and obtrudes itself into the Holy of Holies. M. Huysmans himself, in spite of his repugnance at the tasteless commercialism of Lourdes, was a whole-hearted believer in the miracles. Protestant visitors, like Mr Oxenham, have in spite of themselves been swept into belief by the infectious fervours of the multitudes and the astonishing cures certified by the Doctors' Bureau. Yet a calm consideration of the facts and the claim built on them cannot ignore altogether the squalid quality of the vested interests which have grown up around the Grotto of Lourdes. The medieval story which sets in contrast the poverty of St Peter and the vast wealth which St Peter's successor gathered from the Jubilee, and St Peter's power to work miracles with the impotence of his wealthy successor, expressed a conviction which cannot easily be banished from a religious mind. Here in Lourdes miracle-

working and money-getting go together. The *magnalia Dei* are displayed in a setting of "good business." The connection is, to say the least, disconcerting. Only under the coercion of irresistible proofs could we rightly override our repugnance, and force ourselves to acknowledge that Lourdes is the scene of miraculous exhibitions of Divine power. Can it be reasonably maintained that such proofs are offered ?

CHAPTER IV

THE FAITH-HEALER

The faith-healer's power is probably far more widely distributed than is commonly suspected. Why can one man maintain discipline though apparently destitute of almost every element of impressiveness, and another man though to all seeming admirably equipped for the purpose is quite unable to do so? What is the explanation of that strange power over savages and wild animals which belongs to some men and not to others? Why is one nurse able to bring a power of calmness and refreshment into a sick man's room, and another tortures him by every movement she makes and every word she speaks? "The power of Phillips Brooks in the sick-room," writes his biographer, "was recognised as something wonderful and rare. A mysterious influence seemed to go forth from him for good, for strength and life, even when he sat down in silence by the

bedside and no need was felt for words." [1] Who can doubt that, if he had essayed the rôle of a faith-healer, Phillips Brooks would have established as great reputation in that character as he established in the more normal categories of the preacher and the Divine ?

What is the secret of the orator's power ? It is not his voice, or his gestures, or even his eloquence : for often these are richly possessed by those who are yet quite destitute of the mysterious faculty by which men are swept off their feet by a sentence and calmed by a movement of the speaker's hand. We can but say that there is a force in personality which defies analysis, and finds expression in modes and measures which are as inexplicable as they are amazing.

Education, however, seems to be unfavourable to the exercise of the faith-healer's power, and this may explain the fact that the more conspicuous of modern faith-healers have not been educated men. In former times this was probably not the case, since education did not necessarily breed scepticism in the mind ; but now a knowledge of history or science or philosophy is fatal to the " faith " which heals

[1] *Life and Letters*, by Professor Allen, p. 807.

and is healed. Similarly, it is found by our psycho-therapeutists that a critical attitude of mind in the patient hinders the requisite suggestibility. Dr Rivers observes on the effect of a sincere belief in his own powers by the medicine man of the Melanesians :

> " At the same time there is reason to believe that he is not wholly a deceiver, but in some measure shares the general belief in his own powers. Even that degree of intimacy with those who practice medico-magical and medico-religious arts which is possible to such a visitor as I have been among several peoples, is enough to show the sincerity and earnestness of many of these practitioners. I believe that, in many cases, it is the same among ourselves, and that a study of our own quacks and charlatans with that amount of care which we devote to the Australian or the Melanesian leech, would show us the impostor far less than is usually supposed. Imposition there is, no doubt, but, if such a study were carried out from a psychological point of view, it would often reveal the enthusiast

and the crank in even greater measure than the impostor." [1]

If it cannot be denied that faith-healing and imposture are very commonly associated, it must also be allowed that the temptations to imposture which beset the popular faith-healer are very powerful. Sick people are abnormally credulous, for the ardour of their desire to be rid of their pain predisposes them to embrace any hope of relief which may present itself. As his fame spreads, the faith-healer becomes canonised, all but deified, in the popular imagination. He has to live up to his reputation. An immense expectation is kindled by his presence, and all he says and does is assumed to be significant and supernatural. He is tempted to respond to this attitude of wondering hope, and to serve himself of this receptive credulity. He is in much the same position as the fashionable medium, who often illustrates the same process of moral declension, being led on beyond his beliefs, and beyond his powers, by the insistent faith of his victims. And, of course, in the case of the faith-healer as in that of the medium there may easily

[1] *Medicine, Magic, and Religion*, p. 50.

enter the gross prevailing thought of gain. "*The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil,*" writes St Paul, and the truth of his words is nowhere more clearly disclosed than in the history of faith-healers and mediums. Purses fly open at their approach. What will men not give to him who brings to the diseased the boon of health, and to the forlorn the presence of their beloved? Browning's acute analysis of the moral paradox presented by the medium will serve also to elucidate the kindred paradox of the faith-healing quack:

"I cheat, and what's the happy consequence?
You find full justice straightway dealt you out,
Each want supplied, each ignorance set at ease,
Each folly fooled. No life-long labour now
As the price of worse than nothing!

"Here's true life indeed,
And the world well won now, mine for the first time!
And all this might be, may be, and with good help
Of a little lying shall be; so Sludge lies!"

But, though impostors have been many, there have been many faith-healers who seem to have believed sincerely in their ability and obligation to heal the sick. The well-known Valentine Greatrakes (1629–1683),

"the stroker," is an excellent example of a sincere and disinterested faith-healer. Glanvill in his *Sadducismus Triumphatus* quotes the following account which he had received from a "learned and reverend" friend, and which merits reproduction in full:

> "The great discourse now at the coffee-houses and everywhere is about Mr G., the famous Irish stroker, concerning whom 'tis like you expect an account from me. He undergoes various censures here; some take him to be a conjuror and some an impostor; but others again adore him as an apostle. I confess I think the man is free from all design, of a very agreeable conversation, not addicted to any vice nor to any sect or party, but is, I believe, a sincere Protestant. I was three weeks together with him at my Lord Conway's, and saw him, I think, lay his hands upon a thousand persons; and really there is something in it more than ordinary, but I am convinced 'tis not miraculous. I have seen pains strangely fly before his hand, till he hath chased them out of the body; dimness cleared and deafness

cured by his touch; twenty persons at several times in fits of the falling sickness were in two or three minutes brought to themselves so as to tell where their pain was, and then he hath pursued it until he hath driven it out at some extreme part; running sores of the King's Evil dried up, and kernels brought to a suppuration by his hand; grievous sores of many months' date in a few days healed; obstructions and stoppings removed; cancerous knots in the breast dissolved, etc.

"But yet I have many reasons to persuade me that nothing of all this is miraculous; he pretends not to give testimony to any doctrine; the manner of his operation speaks it to be natural; the cure seldom succeeds without reiterating touches; his patients often relapse; he fails frequently; he can do nothing where there is any decay in nature, and many distempers are not at all obedient to his touch. So that, I confess, I refer all his virtue to his particular temper and complexion; and I take his spirits to be a kind of elixir and universal ferment, and that he cures,

as Dr M. expresseth it, by a sanative contagion."

In reply to further inquiries the same correspondent wrote:

"As for Mr G., what opinions he hath of his own gift, and how he came to know it, I answer, he hath a different apprehension of it from yours or mine; and certainly believeth it to be an immediate gift from heaven, and 'tis no wonder, for he is no philosopher; and you will wonder less when you hear how he came to know it, as I have often received it from his own mouth.

"About three or four years ago, he had a strong impulse upon his spirit that continually pursued him whatever he was about, at his business or devotion, alone or in company, that spake to him by this inward suggestion, 'I have given thee the gift of curing the Evil.' This suggestion was so importunate that he complained to his wife that he thought he was haunted. She apprehended it as an extravagancy of fancy, but he told her he believed there was more in it, and was resolved to try. He did not long

want opportunity. There was a neighbour of his grievously afflicted with the King's Evil. He stroked her, and the effect succeeded, and for about a twelvemonth together he pretended to cure no other distemper. But then the ague being very rife in the neighbourhood, the same impulse after the same manner spoke within him, 'I have given thee the gift of curing the ague.' And meeting with persons in their fits, and taking them by the hand, or laying his hand upon their breasts, the ague left them. About half a year after the accustomed impulse became more general, and suggested to him, 'I have given thee the gift of healing,' and then he attempted all diseases indifferently; and though he saw strange effects, yet he doubted whether the causes were any virtue that came from him, or the people's fancy. To convince him of his incredulity as he lay one night in bed one of his hands was struck dead, and the usual impulse suggested to him to make trial of his virtue upon himself, which he did, stroking it with his other hand, and then it immediately returned to its former liveli-

ness. This was repeated two or three nights (or mornings) together."

Mr Hickson gives a curiously similar account of his own discovery of healing power. His first cure was effected when he was about fourteen years old, in 1882, and is thus narrated :

"We were sitting together one evening in the drawing-room, and a little cousin was suffering acutely from neuralgia, and in a simple way I was asking Our Lord to help her, when it suddenly came into my mind, almost as though the word had been spoken, 'lay your hands on her face,' and I immediately did so, with the result that the pain vanished. A few days later I was similarly impressed to lay hands on the face of her sister, who had St Vitus's dance, and the cure was immediate. After this I had many cures—chilblains, headaches, etc.—and my mother told me that God was evidently working through me in healing the sick, and that we must pray about it, asking Him to guide me in the right exercise of this ministry." [1]

[1] *Heal the Sick*, p. 6.

The question of the faith-healer's right to receive remuneration cannot but suggest itself. Doctors and clergy are paid for their services. Why should not he be paid also? Professional ministries, involving special and often very costly preparation, may be justified in receiving fees on the ground that special training tends to secure efficiency, and provides the public with some security against imposition; but the inspired amateur, who comes on the scene with no other credentials than his own declarations and achievements, stands outside the conditions under which a recognised profession exists, and may fairly claim the complete independence which necessarily attaches to every direct intervention of Divine power. Ought the test which the primitive church applied to claimants of charismatic gifts to be applied by the modern church to faith-healers: "If he ask for money he is a false prophet?" It would appear that there is among faith-healers themselves some perception of incongruity between their character and the receiving of money. Greatrakes bestowed his benefits without charge. In 1666 the Corporation of Worcester gave him a public entertainment in acknowledgment of the cures he had gratui-

tously effected in their city. Mr Hickson is reported to charge no fees for his ministry.

But, apart from fees, may the "spiritual" healer accept voluntary gifts? It is obvious that these may be more considerable than fees. The authorities of several cathedrals have abolished the fees payable by visitors on the ground, apart from reasons of another kind, that experience demonstrates the financial prudence of this course. Freewill offerings produce more money than officially-appointed fees. It is of course obvious that, if a faith-healer is to devote his life to the exercise of his healing gift, he may fairly advance a claim to maintenance; and it is reasonable to think that the cost of his maintenance should be provided from the gifts of his beneficiaries. Yet it is precisely here that the door opens for the entrance of base motives which may lead on to grave abuses. History delivers an emphatic warning. The enormous gains which accrued to churches and monasteries through the offerings of the pilgrims, who had been attracted to them by the fame of the miraculous cures effected by the relics of the local saint, gave a disastrous spur to cupidity and fraud, until the whole system of ecclesiastical heal-

ing sank under the scandal of imposture. In every age, and in none more apparently than in our own, the healing quack has found a gold-mine in the credulity of the public, and no precautions can be considered to be superfluous or excessive which aim at protecting a ministry, *ex hypothesi* in unique and plenary measure Divine, from the dishonouring association with money-making.

Is the modern faith-healer to be regarded as standing in the succession of the historic saints? He is not often an eminent, not always a respectable, figure in civilised society to-day. Often enough, indeed, like the late Dr Dowie and a host of less notorious quacks, he is a cunning and covetous impostor. "We have to face the fact," observes Dr Percy Gardner demurely, "that those who work cures in this manner, though usually men of some distinction, are by no means always noted for high moral and spiritual qualities." [1] But might not as much be said of the historic saints? We know really very little about them, and least of all about some of those who enjoyed the widest posthumous repute as faith-healers. "Indeed," writes Wesley with unusual asperity, "we seldom find a

[1] *Historic View of the New Testament*, p. 143.

saint of God's making sainted by the Bishop of Rome." [1]

Miracle was the inevitable accompaniment of sanctity in the Dark Ages, as inevitable as the nimbus round a saint's head in a painted window. Such was the lust for prodigies in the medieval mind that the distinction between fact and fiction seems to disappear in the copious literature which proclaims the triumph of the saints. Father Delahaye has discussed with commendable frankness the conditions under which hagiographical composition proceeded in the "Ages of Faith," and a perusal of his candid pages cannot fail to breed a salutary scepticism in the mind. Even a superficial student of Christian history will have been impressed by the fact that the working of miracles is rarely associated with the greatest names. The two most illustrious miracle-workers in England, St Cuthbert of Durham and St Thomas of Canterbury, represent rather a morbid asceticism and an exorbitant clericalism than more evangelical qualities, and neither stands in the first rank of intellect or statesmanship.

Are there any limits to the faith-healer's

[1] *Journal*, 3rd December 1761.

power? In theory obviously there can be none, for the power of God is limitless, but in experience it has been widely held that a limit can be discerned. A distinction has been made between "functional" and "organic" disease; the former may, the latter cannot, be healed by "faith." Sir Clifford Allbutt, writing in 1910, ascribed "miraculous cures so far as they are genuine" to "suggestion," and limited them to cases of hysteria. After referring to the faith-healings of antiquity, he continued:

> "A careful study of all reported cures of this miraculous or miraculoid kind, study illustrated for us many years ago by Charcot, proved to him and proves to the expert observers of to-day, that they all—palsies, convulsions, and the rest, often inveterate cases—are and have been cures of one disease, and of one only, namely hysteria; a malady which in its protean manifestations mocks all and any particular diseases. I say this of the genuine cases, but the majority of such wonders recorded turn out on inquiry (like the 'Grimsby' case) to be grossly exaggerated or wholly false. The

> 'miraculous cures' then, so far as they are genuine, are cures by suggestion; they take their place with cures of the same kind of disorder by panic, such as an alarm of fire; by 'hypnotism' or by any other overmastering impression which startles or transports the balance of the bodily functions from one centre of equilibrium to another higher and more stable one." [1]

This statement was submitted to Sir Clifford Allbutt shortly before his death, and returned with a short note appended as follows:

> "I think this is correct—that the one *malady* covering many varieties is hysteria. But in this passage the universal influence of emotional ideas for and against all vital activities in man is not considered."

In January 1925 Sir Clifford Allbutt contributed to the *Guardian* an article on faith-healing, which had special reference to the views of Mr Hickson. It is written with great courtesy and caution, and merits the

[1] *Medicine and the Church*, p. 35. London, 1910.

most careful study. He indicates a certain modification of his earlier views:

> "The clinician, for convenience, makes a hazy division between functional and organic disease. If an organ or part be obliterated there can, so far, be no recovery; but the molecular groups of which all organs consist may be thrust out of equilibrium, and so remain in abeyance or oblivion for an indefinite time, as one may press down a spring or put a peg into it. So particles and masses of the body thus lying or held in abeyance, often by the inhibition of some other part, may so lie up until, by some jar or storm, the inhibition is removed or the pressure relieved, when, if not pressed beyond their elastic limits, they will spring back into their normal attitudes. Then they may take up their old duties again as if no adversity had happened to them. Even obvious injury, irreparable as it may be, is commonly surrounded by a margin or halo of such functional distortions, irritative or arrestive. This is often the case with palsies. A palsy may be,

often is, wholly factitious; but if it be itself genuine, and perhaps incurable, it spreads (metaphorically speaking) demoralisation around it, often far beyond the parts directly affected; so that we may have to do with considerable areas of secondary disaffection or disability, functional not organic; often not even in contiguity with the primary seat of disease. Indeed such a secondary area may be more conspicuous than the primary focus, and its cure the more dramatic. Or even if there be no default, obvious or intimate, the mind may lie under a baffled will, or an overpowering conviction, or some obsession born of a mental shock or dislocation; or, again, may be beguiled into a subconscious mimicry. Such clouds a fresh gale may dispel. But indeed such false or fictitious maladies are cured almost daily by the modest art of a sympathetic doctor."

After adducing some examples, he proceeds:

"The scoffer says: Show me a broken leg reset by faith, and I will listen to your pretensions. A part thus damaged

cannot, it is true, be cured at once; but even in this case much can be achieved, even from the very beginning, by encouragement, massage, and so forth; so that a disabling group of abeyances should not gather round and multiply the primary lesion."

While, then, the effect of faith is most commonly disclosed in the cure of functional disease, we may not think that it cannot extend to the care of organic, since the dividing line between functional and organic is not more than a working fiction. Dr Rivers states the case with his accustomed clearness and decision:

"It is in the treatment of functional disease and of the functional accompaniments of organic disease that psychotherapeutic measures are most obviously applicable, but the scope of their usefulness is far from being limited to these. When it is claimed that some psychotherapeutic measure, employed by physician or priest, has cured a case of organic disease, it will often be found that all that has been done is to remove the functional disorders which so often

accompany organic disease. Psycho-therapeutic agencies can certainly influence organic conditions themselves, though the investigation of cases like these is attended by such difficulties that the mode of action is still surrounded by much doubt. We know that suggestion, especially in the form of hypnotism, can produce changes in organic processes and especially in the circulation. If such an organic change as a blister can be produced by suggestion, it is easy to understand how other organic changes can be ameliorated or removed by similar means.

" A more frequent cause of the success of psycho-therapeutic measures in organic disease depends on the fact that many forms of progressive organic disease—even so grave an illness as cancer—are liable to periods of retardation or quiescence. Disease usually depends on a struggle between some noxious agent which has found its way into the body and the mechanism of the body itself. Progressive disease is that in which the external agents have the upper hand in this struggle. Any factor which raises

the efficiency of the intrinsic forces, or, in other words, which reinforces the vitality of the patient, may diminish the ravages of the destroying agent and lead to retardation or quiescence of the disease; or may even in some cases turn the balance in the direction of recovery. It is thus intelligible that psycho-therapeutic measures should be capable of the beneficial action upon organic disease so often imputed to them by leech or priest, quite apart from the mere removal of functional complications. The scope of psycho-therapy is therefore as wide as medicine itself. It is especially applicable, however, in those states which depend on diminished efficiency of the nervous system and are classified together as neuroses." [1]

In his "Remarks on Spiritual Healing," contributed to the *British Medical Journal* (18th June 1910), Dr H. T. Butlin, while maintaining that the limits of faith-healing were generally well marked, conceded that

[1] Article on "Psycho-therapeutics" in Hastings' *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics.* Edinburgh, 1918.

they might be occasionally overpassed. "He was prepared," he said, "to suggest that every now and again a case of true organic disease might, perhaps, be cured by faith," and, since this slight chance of cure existed, he looked with sympathetic toleration on the healing essays of the churches. The faith-healer possessed an advantage over the scientific physician in the circumstance that his theory was adequate to explain *all* cures however amazing. Since, therefore, it could not be denied that, in the present state of medical science, some amazing cures were scientifically inexplicable, he would not refuse the "benefit of the doubt" to the faith-healers, and give a provisional acceptance to their achievements.

> "We can explain, and do explain, many of the spiritual cures, but we cannot explain them all. No doubt, there is an explanation for every one of them, but we are sometimes at a loss to find the explanation of the individual case. Nor is this surprising. For every medical man of large and long experience must have seen patients recover who, according to our laws and theories,

ought not to have recovered, and he often finds it quite impossible to explain, even to himself, the reason. There has been no question of treatment, no question of faith; but when matters seemed at their worst and everyone had given up hope, the patient has slowly or suddenly begun to mend and continued to do so to complete recovery. We can no more explain such cases than we can explain some of the cases of spiritual healing. We are obliged to accept them as facts, but we are unable to explain them. The faith-healer is under no difficulty in the presence of such cases. He not only accepts the fact, but has a ready explanation of it—that it is an evidence of the existence of a superior being, and is a manifestation of a power and wisdom infinitely superior to our own. The stranger and more improbable the cure, so much the greater glory to God."

Therefore, he will not "join a crusade against spiritual healing," for the world is full of sufferers, and can ill dispense with any curative agency. And even if the theory be

baseless, no great harm is caused by it, and its rough rejection would hurt many good souls :

> " Knowing as I do how the belief in cures by faith is bound up with religious belief in the minds of many truly devout and excellent persons, and that the breaking or the shaking of it might weaken the very foundation of their belief in God, I am not disposed to war against it, but to let it be, believing that the world is none the worse, but distinctly the better, for religious beliefs which tend to make men and women kinder, less careful for themselves and more thoughtful for others—which make them, in truth, better men and women than they otherwise would be."

A frank plea of agnosticism is not to be mistaken for a confession of faith. It may, perhaps, be thought that in his generous concern for the feelings of individuals, Dr Butlin has done something less than justice to the larger interest of truth. We shall have occasion later to consider the religious significance of the doctrine which " spiritual healing " assumes. Here it suffices to point

out how slight and hesitating is the concession which even a sympathetic physician can make to the claim that all forms of disease are curable by faith.

The question has been mooted, whether the Church ought not to grant a formal commission to those of its members who are known to possess the faith-healer's gift? Ought they not to be recognised as specially endowed by the Holy Spirit, and on that account as entitled to exercise a ministry with the full authorisation of the Church? There are, however, very grave objections which may be urged against any such formal recognition. Not only is it apparent that the faith-healer's gift is rather a natural quality than a supernatural grace, but also its exercise is attended with very considerable risks. Very few faith-healers have any adequate medical knowledge. They can neither diagnose correctly, nor advise wisely. Their action may but too easily inflict the gravest injury upon those whom they attempt to assist, and who, by an unwarranted confidence in them, are led to postpone that recourse to the physician or the surgeon, which was really their only chance of recovery, but which could only be serviceable

if secured in time. Mr Anson objects in the interest of religion, which in his belief stands to lose by so close and confessed an association with physical prodigies. He regards faith-healing as a dangerous rival to the curative method ("spiritual healing") which he himself advocates. Without sharing his advocacy, we may endorse his objection :

> "It would be a very great disaster if the Church were contemplating the licensing of spiritual healers merely on the ground that, in addition to being religious people, they appeared to have some quasi-magnetic power in the tips of their fingers. This is what religious people generally think constitutes spiritual healing. And I believe that a great part of our task is to make religious people understand that, however valuable this curious, and little understood, power of removing pain by touch may ultimately prove to be, it is not itself one of the most important healing agencies. And if the Church at all tried to exalt it as being more religious or spiritual than the re-education of the mind or the skilled physical care of the

body, it would be a means of bringing religion into contempt more quickly than by almost any other method which could be devised."[1]

The notoriously slight connection between the faith-healer's gift and high moral character, to which we have adverted above, and the considerable temptations to which the faith-healer is exposed, and to which but too many succumb, render it in the highest degree undesirable that the Church should grant any official recognition to faith-healers.

[1] *Spiritual Healing*, p. 125.

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CHAPTER V

THE HICKSON-MAILLARD DOCTRINE

Prayer has a large place in the argument of the "spiritual healers." They fasten on a few texts in the New Testament, which they do not make any serious attempt to understand, but take in a crudely literal sense, and make the foundation of a great fabric of unwarrantable assumption. The limitless power of the Almighty is, they hold, at the service of the true believer, and will be released unfailingly in response to prayer. The Divine Will in the matter of disease is sufficiently known, for disease not less than sin is the devil's work, and therefore destined to destruction at the hands of the Redeemer. This theory could not be more frankly stated than by the Rev. John Maillard, a licensed priest of the Diocese of London, who describes himself as Warden of the Divine Healing Fellowship. His small book—*The Sacrament of Healing*—is highly commended

by Mr Hickson in an illuminating "Foreword," which contains the information that the author has devoted his whole time since 1919 to ministering to the sick and afflicted. "He has come into personal touch with a large number of sufferers day by day, and his message is sound and practical." In view of the large amount of episcopal approval which Mr Hickson has received, a real importance attaches to this candid exposition of his doctrine. The argument is purely deductive. Certain postulates are laid down, and from these the requisite inferences are drawn. The following extract will suffice to indicate the thesis :

> "As there dwelt in the incarnate body of Jesus Christ the fulness of the Godhead, so the Holy Spirit indwells the Church, which is the Body of Christ and the vehicle of His teaching and ministry. . . .
>
> "This divine character and constitution of the Church reflects itself in the new nature of all who are born again of the Spirit into the Body of Christ. . . .
>
> "This rebirth of faith is equally true of the physical body as it is of the mind and

spirit. As the spirit enters upon a supernatural existence, so also the body is clothed with supernatural energy. . . .

"Perfection and impregnable health are thus brought within the reach of man, for nothing less than this can be true of the child of God, as it was true of Jesus Christ, and as it must be true of His Body, the Church." [1]

This frank equation of Jesus as described in the Gospels, and the Christian as now living in the world, carries important consequences. Jesus was free from physical disease: so is the genuine Christian. Jesus had complete control over disease: so has the genuine Christian. Jesus exorcised demons: so does the Christian. Jesus never made use of physical remedies: the genuine Christian need not.

Much is made of the Holy Communion, for the Sacrament itself involves that double aspect of Redemption, spiritual and physical, which the argument emphasises:

"Many have found fuller faith in the healing power of Christ, through a correct understanding of the spiritual benefits

[1] Pp. 14, 15, 16.

> conveyed in this service, and there are not a few who believe that the Holy Communion will become the great healing service in the Revival which is already taking place." [1]

Prayer is, of course, the grand instrument of physical healing. It is indeed irresistible. "It does not know the meaning of incurability." [2] Forgiveness extends not merely to sin, but to the physical consequences of sin: [3]

> "Whilst it is true that a man may reap physical sickness through his own wrong-doing, neither is sin nor the consequence of sin irrevocable; as soon as he begins to sow the seeds of good life he will begin to reap renewed health." [4]

Disease is commonly associated with pain, and, if it be true that Jesus never experienced the first, it is held universally that He enjoyed no exemption from the last. "He suffered" is a clause in the Creed which disallows an ancient and obstinate heresy. The chapter on "The Problem of Pain" is a curious example of mental confusion. The author confesses perplexity, but reiterates his con-

[1] P. 33. [2] P. 22. [3] P. 35. [4] P. 36.

viction that only lack of faith perpetuates disease among Christians :

> " Christ, in His contact with disease, had one attitude and one only. He succeeded where we fail, for the simple reason that He had faith over and above our faith ; the power of the Holy Spirit suffered no loss in flowing through the pure channel of His sacred Humanity. However closely we may cling to the belief that material and spiritual means supplement one another, we have to remember that Jesus Christ never used material remedies, but that He looked always to the presence and the operation of the Holy Spirit. We resort to material remedies, because we fall short of His measure of faith. No reference made here to *materia medica* is made in disparagement of that science, but in disparagement of the feeble faith of believers who lack the spiritual growth which should enable them to enjoy the fruit of the divine revelation of their Lord and Master, Jesus Christ." [1]

The attitude towards medical science which

[1] P. 45.

is here disclosed is worth noting. We are accustomed to hear from "spiritual healers" very earnest disclaimers of any belittlement of the physicians, and no doubt these disclaimers are as sincere as they are earnest and frequent. None the less, the belittlement is inevitable, and follows as a matter of logical consequence wherever the theory of spiritual healing secures acceptance. For the Christian is offered a choice between two methods of being healed—directly at God's hands in answer to the prayer of faith, or indirectly through the physicians. The one is certain, and extends to every variety of disease at every stage of its development. The other is relatively precarious, and must often acknowledge limits to its application. The latter must necessarily take the lower place. To have recourse to it at all is, for the devout Christian, to acknowledge a sinful failure of faith. Mr Maillard, with whom presumably Mr Hickson agrees, writes with commendable candour on the point:

> "It will be well to further consider, though briefly, the relation of medical science to divine healing. The author cannot commit himself, as bishops and

other clergy often do, to unqualified approval of medical science. He would rather occupy the ground upon which many of the doctors stand, and range himself especially with those, many of them high up in their profession, who only use simple and natural remedies. He cannot pretend to believe that injecting animal matter and poisonous substances into the human body is the best way of doing God's work. His own position, based on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Holy Scripture, which he does not regard as out of date, qualifies the use of material remedies, but he would not for one moment deprive others of such use. To say that divine healing supplements medical healing only confuses the whole issue: Jesus Christ did not use material remedies, neither did He exercise divine healing to supplement them. If we have sufficient faith to be healed by the activity of forces on the spiritual plane, then there is no need to resort to forces on the material plane, for the words of Jesus Christ are not a platitude, but they reveal a principle, 'According to your faith be it unto you.' . . .

> "We are students in the school of Jesus, learning His methods, and our success in this ministry will determine its relation to other sciences of healing; although such ministry is not opposed to them, it is, nevertheless, quite distinct from them, and it is doubtful whether it ever overlaps them. . . .
>
> "The student of divine healing has an entirely different point of view from those who look for the physical antecedents of those diseases in seeking to combat and destroy them. He believes that the origin of disease is never physical, but that disease springs from the malignancy of the powers of spiritual darkness, manifesting their power on the physical plane of man's being." [1]

We shall not perhaps do the author any injustice if we infer that he is opposed to vaccination. The "leading case" of small-pox may well determine the verdict of many on the social implications of "spiritual healing."

How far is a man justified in applying a theory of his own to others whom it affects

[1] P. 54 f.

and over whom he has authority? Is a Christian parent morally free, when his child falls sick, to substitute his own prayers for the physician's treatment? May he rightly require another to run a risk which for himself he is prepared to face? Does his freedom of conscience extend so far? These questions are raised in a very unpleasing form when, as is not infrequently the case, some ignorant father, with Bible in hand, appears before a coroner's jury to explain why he omitted to send for the doctor when his child sickened of diphtheria. Mr Maillard has a chapter on "The Healing of Children," which should be carefully weighed by the patrons and advocates of his doctrine.

He teaches that a bad heredity can be remedied before birth by the mother's prayers; that by careful training the child can be "saved from the harvest of sickness called children's complaints"; that by well-selected prayers and readings the young Christian can be shielded from disease, and that if, in spite of all, the disaster of sickness happens, faith concentrated and sustained will triumph. There is no place for medical science in the scheme of a Christian life as here presented.

What are we to say of all this ? The very extravagance of the doctrine is its strength. Fanaticism armed with proof texts from an infallible Scripture is immune from criticism. Against the certitude of the believer what avail the reasonings of history, science, criticism, and common experience ?

Without, then, embarking on the tiresome and certainly futile business of detailed disproof, it may suffice to direct attention to two points which must needs arrest the notice of every student of the waxing literature of spiritual healing :

i. The position assigned to physical health in the scheme of the Christian life.

ii. The conception of prayer implied in the procedure of spiritual healing.

The first conflicts with the tenor of the New Testament and with the spirit of Christianity. The last is frankly non-Christian.

i. Jesus is nowhere represented as a type of manly strength and beauty. No trustworthy description of His Person has come down to us, but it is significant that the earliest view inclines to picture Him as destitute of physical attractions, and the later, which applied to Him the phrase of the Psalmist, "*Thou art fairer than the children of men,*"

was born of the Christological controversies of the time. But none of the Fathers *knew* anything. St Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and the rest merely gave literal force to the prophetic language of Isaiah, "*He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him.*" The evangelists tell us nothing. Much may be inferred from their narratives as to His character, nothing as to His appearance. But from the first the Church admired the significant accuracy of the sacred record: "*He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*" It is no doubt true that an unhealthy asceticism crept over the Church very early in its career, and coloured its thought and life very unfortunately. Nevertheless, it can hardly be doubted that the conception of the Redeemer as bearing the whole burden of human fate, and like His brethren being "*made perfect through suffering,*" comes nearer to the hearts of men, and has a more congruous aspect, than any other.

The acceptance of suffering as a condition of man's earthly lot, and its transformation

into moral discipline thereby, are the characteristic thoughts of the New Testament, not the simple abolition of suffering by a *tour de force* of believing prayer. St Paul, himself the victim of physical disease, "*a thorn in the flesh*," prayed for relief, and, so far as the direct object of his prayer went, prayed in vain. His answer was given in the difficult lesson, "*My power is made perfect in weakness.*" The Apostle's declaration utters the true mind of discipleship under the trial of physical suffering: "*Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*" [1] Nowhere does St Paul encourage in his converts the notion that their religion would guarantee to them immunity from disease. The "*fruits of the Spirit*" on which he insisted are moral, not physical. In the experience of the Church physical vigour has not always, perhaps not often, been associated with spiritual pre-eminence. It would be interesting to supplement the bald record of the Calendar with some health statistics. St Athanasius, like St Paul, had a mean appearance. St Francis, St Catherine of

[1] 2 Cor. xii. 7 ff.

Siena, Blaise Pascal, Richard Baxter, a host of others, were martyrs of disease. The lives of the saints hardly suggest that "health of soul and body are *equally* the heritage of God's children."[1] Neither Christ nor the Apostles offer any solution of the ultimate problem of the world's pain. They take the suffering world as it is, and so treat it as to make its sorrows redemptive. The story in the Fourth Gospel carries perpetual truth: "*And as he passed by he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. We must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*"[2] Christ consecrates suffering: He does not abolish it. Under His influence it becomes the discipline of character and the spur of service: but He promises no immunity from its burden.

The prominence into which physical suffering is brought by the spiritual healers disturbs

[1] *The Sacrament of Healing*, p. 71.

[2] St John, ix. 1 ff.

the proportions of Christianity as it is set forth in the New Testament.

ii. In the opening chapter of his remarkable little book, *Prayer in Christian Theology*—of which the value is out of all proportion to the size—Archdeacon Lilley sets in contrast pagan and Christian prayer. As illustrating the first he quotes Cicero's statement, "We do not pray to Jupiter to make us good, but to give us material benefits." Goodness, virtue, was within the reach of man's unassisted powers, for indeed he had no other measure of it than his own. The gods were fashioned in his own image for good and for evil. But material benefits were often beyond his reach, and to gain them he needed help from above. The primitive notion of prayer is "a development of the spell, *i.e.* of some formula having magical significance by which the invisible powers could be forced to accomplish the results which men desired." That is the essence of pagan prayer—*My* Will be done. It seeks a series of boons, and secures them by insistence, by cajolery, by a kind of consecrated craft. Jesus warned His disciples against pagan notions of prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. "*In praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for*

they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." The essence of Christian prayer is the deliberate subordination of the human will to the Divine—*Thy* Will be done.

> " The uniform Christian tradition condemns as of the nature of blasphemy every attempt or desire to bend the Divine Will to our own. It conceives of prayer as the costing and difficult uplifting of our wills towards God's. It therefore requires as an indispensable antecedent of all acts of prayer an anxious desire to learn with the highest possible degree of certitude what is the Will of God. It enjoins the most confident and fervent prayer for all those things which are beyond all doubt or question according to His Will. And those for the Christian are just the things for which, according to Cicero, no one would think of praying to God. And as to those things for which alone the Roman prayed, and prayed with a simple and unthinking confidence, the most careful Christian teaching has always insisted upon our necessary ignorance as to whether they are according

> to the Divine Will or not, and has therefore impressed upon us the necessity of praying for them, if at all, with that reservation. And, above all, it has most consistently taught that the true attitude of prayer always includes a simple and even joyful acceptance of all the unavoidable pains and disabilities of our lives as, if so accepted, richly ministrant and contributory to our spiritual growth. In other words, it has planted the cross at the heart and centre of the prayer-life." [1]

Mr Hickson and other advocates of "spiritual healing" obscure the materialism of their doctrine of prayer by boldly postulating that the conquest of disease is so manifestly the Will of God that every sick Christian is entitled to pray without reserve for healing, and to count securely on receiving his petition. But the boons they seek are too evidently accordant with the desire of the natural man to pass muster *in foro conscientiæ*. Only when humbly and reverently conditioned by the condition, "if it be Thy Will," can any prayers for temporal blessings

[1] *Prayer in Christian Theology*, p. 7.

be fitting on Christian lips. And when the Will of God is known, as in the case of all those phenomena of Nature which science has brought within the reign of law, the liberty of Christian petition is cancelled. We may not pray for miracles. Nor may we ascribe an almost magical power to our corporate litanies. The prayer wheel is not a Christian instrument, whatever the multitude of requests it discharges to Heaven at every revolution.

No doubt it is easy to find in the New Testament much that, if taken apart from the central teaching of the Gospel, encourages the notion that prayer has an almost automatic effect, and can be used as an instrument of practically limitless potency. During the War much language was used, even by persons in authority, which could be explained on no other assumption. The dervish-like fervour, generated by " mass suggestion " at Lourdes and at " missions of healing," has no other basis. But we ought to read the sacred writings with discrimination, remembering always that " *we have the treasure in earthen vessels,*" and that we must, therefore, be reverently vigilant against " taking God's name in vain " by clothing with His Divine

authority what belongs properly to the limited human agents whom He has willed to use. The slapdash reasoning of John Wesley—"Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand"—is less excusable in the twentieth century than it was in the eighteenth. How essentially un-Christian was the conception of prayer, which held the minds of the earliest believers, is sufficiently indicated by the reference to Elijah in the famous passage which provides the Scriptural authority for "the Sacrament of Healing." "*The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the Heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*" [1] This is more Rabbinic than Christian. An almost magical efficacy is attributed to the prophet's prayer. The action of the Almighty in sending and in removing the drought follows automatically on His servant's petition. Faith has chained Omnipotence to a man's will. This mechanical, and essentially pagan, conception has prevailed widely in

[1] St James v. 16–18.

Christendom. It runs through the legends of the saints, and it was once and for all disallowed when Jesus rebuked the Apostles for desiring, after the fashion of Elijah, to "*bid fire to come down from Heaven, and consume*" the inhospitable Samaritans. The efficacy of Christian prayer is not, thus simply, to be thought of in terms of power. It must be morally conditioned, as St James himself insisted when he wrote sternly to the Christians of Jerusalem: "*Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures.*" Jesus Christ taught the same sobering truth when He linked together the Divine forgiveness and human willingness to forgive: "*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"[1] How difficult it is to hold to this stern truth! How easily we revert to the old pagan view, and "*think that we shall be heard for our much speaking*"! The guilty king in Hamlet, pleading for forgiveness, discovers a spiritual situation which is as natural as it is perilous:

[1] St Matt. vi. 14, 15.

"Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence ?
And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,
To be forestalled, ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down ? Then, I'll look up ;
My fault is past."

The knowledge of the Divine Will is not limited to morality : it extends to the laws of Nature and the conditions of human society. Always it limits the range of legitimate petition. Where we do not know, we may ask, though always with the condition that the Divine Will be done : but where we know, to ask for something else is to sin. "The importunate widow" is not to be made the Christian's model for her importunity, but for her indestructible confidence in the prevailing power of a just cause. The lesson of the parable is found in the unrighteous judge's ultimate surrender to the appeal for justice : "*And shall not God avenge his elect, which cry to him day and night, and he is long-suffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily.*" [1]

One text appears so constantly in the literature of spiritual healing that it must be

[1] St Luke xviii. 7, 8.

considered. Mr Hickson quotes it as if it were a conclusive proof of his case ; [1] and in Mr Maillard's book it is quoted as " a direct assurance " that miracles of healing shall be performed by the Church.[2] According to another advocate of " spiritual healing " this text " definitely assures us that miracles of healing *will* take place wherever a whole-hearted faith in Christ is in active energy." [3] The text is in the Fourth Gospel, and runs thus :

> " Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ; because I go unto the Father." [4]

It is, perhaps, worth while to note that the Fourth Gospel is markedly different from the Synoptics, both in the miracles which it contains, and in the attitude of Jesus towards them, which it indicates. " The Synoptical miracles are, in the main, miracles of *humanity* : the Johannine miracles are,

[1] *Heal the Sick*, p. 237.
[2] *The Sacrament of Healing*, p. 79.
[3] *Spiritual Healing*, by Robert C. L. Reade, p. 30.
[4] St John xiv. 12.

so to speak, miracles of State." [1] While in the earlier narratives Jesus seems deliberately to avoid the crowds which flock to Him on account of His reputation as healer and exorcist, in the later He works miracles in order to arrest public attention. It is the difference between history and theology. The Synoptic evangelists record what the Fourth Evangelist interprets. Bishop Westcott quotes and endorses St Augustine's opinion that by the " greater works " which Christ's return to the Father would enable believers to perform, we must understand works of wider spiritual effect, such as the preaching on the Day of Pentecost. The ministry of Jesus had been limited to Palestine: that of the Church would be world-wide. He converted individuals: the Church would win nations. " *Evangelizantibus discipulis—gentes etiam crediderunt; haec sunt sine dubitatione majora.*" " There is," comments the Bishop, " no reference to miracles of a more extraordinary kind as if there were a possibility of this material comparison." [2] Similarly Dr Abbott in his great work, *The Fourfold Gospel*, writes :

[1] Bruce, *The Miraculous Element in the Gospels*, p. 151. *Cf.* Scott, *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 164.

[2] *Commentary*, p. 204.

> "The 'greater works' are manifestly the works of the Gospel. They imply the saving of souls and the forgiving of sins. Mark connects the forgiving of sins with the moral of the withering of the fig-tree. But it is manifest that 'works,' in John, do not point to such a material miracle." [1]

Dr Sanday adopts the same interpretation.[2] Dr Dearmer, *Body and Soul*, has an interpretation of his own, too curious to be omitted: "We have been told to look forward to even greater works than those recorded by the evangelists. And why? Surely because with every century of his development man becomes increasingly spiritual, and what our Lord did with the sick untutored Syrians of the first century, a humble disciple may be able also to do with the better material of later ages." [3] But the cures are most easily effected now among Zulus and Asiatics!

These are weighty opinions. Nevertheless, it may, perhaps, be doubted whether this was the view of the evangelist himself. He may

[1] Section v. 235.

[2] *Authorship and Historical Character of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 225.

[3] P. 125.

well have had miracles in his thought, though he was mistaken. Experience has not justified his precise expectation. But his general position has received in Christian history an abundant verification. The activity of the Risen Christ in His Church has satisfied his prophecy in ampler measure than he could have perceived. By comparison with the " greater works " of historic Christianity the petty and dubious achievements of the faith-healers have a pitiful aspect.

CHAPTER VI

EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The New Testament ascribes many miracles of healing to the Founder of Christianity and to His Apostles. How far does this fact authenticate the phenomena of "spiritual healing"? Can we argue boldly from the first century to the twentieth, and see in Mr Hickson's "Missions of Healing" a reproduction of the healing ministry of Jesus Christ? It appears that the miracles ascribed by the evangelists to our Lord may be regarded in two ways. Either they may be viewed as attestations of Divinity: or they may be looked upon as revelations of humanity. In the one case they are unique in history: in the other, they are supreme examples of an ever-recurring factor. The first was the view taken generally in former times: the last tends to prevail in the modern Church as the Scriptures are read and interpreted in the light of critical learning.

Mr Illingworth may be taken as an excellent example of conservative orthodoxy. He devotes a chapter of his valuable and illuminating volume, *Divine Immanence*, to the subject of miracles, and argues from the probability of their occurrence in the life of the Incarnate to the improbability of their occurrence apart from that life. He has in view "a class of thinkers in the present day who tend, in some sense, to believe in the Incarnation, and yet to disbelieve in miracles, and who would therefore substitute for the Christian tradition a non-miraculous Christianity, as being more in accordance with the spirit of the age." He meets the objector half-way. The impressiveness of a miracle, he urges, depends on its being seen against a background of normal uniformity. The essential point is the adequacy of the purpose which miracle is designed to serve. "The habitual course of nature, which alone makes life and knowledge possible, may well be traversed by lightning flashes from the spiritual world, if both alike are being guided by one power to one end, and that end, in the strict sense, supernatural." From this point of view the Incarnation stands alone, and the uniqueness of the historic circumstances does but reflect

appropriately, nay inevitably, the uniqueness of the central fact:

> "We regard the miracles of Christ as unique manifestations of His unique personality; things which indeed we could not have foreseen, but which we recognise, when once recorded, as eminently congruous with His life and work. He claimed to be superhuman, and the claim required substantiation to gain a hearing. Attention had to be arrested; expectation had to be aroused; the advent of a new era had to be emphasised; and that in an age and among a people that was ready to accept miracles, and therefore to whom miracles were a natural—not to say inevitable—mode of address. Authority, absolute, unqualified, paramount authority, is the essential characteristic of the life of Christ; and that authority must needs be exhibited, in order to be received. It is difficult even to conceive how otherwise a beginning could have been made.
>
> "But the very fact that the miracles of Christ seem, from this point of view, so natural, makes it all the more in-

structive to notice the severe economy with which they are used. He never once employs them to relieve His personal necessities, but lives and suffers in strict obedience to the ordinary laws of nature. He refuses to work them to confute enemies, and warns His disciples that after all they are subordinate things. He carefully connects them with the customary course of life, in a way to show that they were not meant to supersede it: *e.g.* 'Go show thyself to the priest.' —'Go wash in Siloam.'—'Gather up the fragments that remain.'—'He commanded that something should be given her to eat.'—'Loose him, and let him go.' There is no sign in all this of any intention to introduce a reign of miracle, bringing intellectual confusion into the world. On the contrary, the fact that Christ manifestly could, yet habitually would not overrule it, gives additional emphasis to the reign of law—an emphasis which the whole tenor of His teaching serves further to enforce. For the burden of that teaching is that the course of nature is the will of God: and that faith should recognise that will every-

where ; in the clothing of the lilies, the feeding of the ravens, the fall of a sparrow, the sunshine and the rain : not less than in the sicknesses that punish or the catastrophes that execute swift judgment upon sin. Christian life accordingly consists in accepting the order of events, not in the spirit of fatalism, but in the spirit of faith ; not expecting to be exempt from what is common to man, but, patiently enduring to the end, 'as seeing Him that is invisible.' This recognition of spiritual significance where the bodily eye sees none is the very essence of the Christian probation ; the characteristic distinction of the Christian life. It is that walking by faith and not by sight, that belief of those who have not seen, upon which the Gospels and Epistles alike lay all their stress. And to make this possible, miracles, in the ordinary sense, must cease. But they cease, it should be noticed, as the scattered lights of sunrise fade into the fullness of an ampler day. They cease because the fact which they sporadically emphasised has now become a Christian commonplace ; the fact that divine

providence everywhere and always uses matter for the furtherance of spiritual ends. They do not vanish out of history as though they had never been, and leave man to lapse into apathetic acceptance of the inexorable order of events. They have inaugurated a new epoch: they have interpreted the order of events afresh: they have accentuated and intensified the providential aspect of the world. And their perpetual trace remains in the abiding consciousness of Christians that 'all things work together for good to them that love God.'

"The cessation, therefore, of miracles was as needful as their occurrence: and we no longer look to meet with them in ordinary life."[1]

By this reasoning Dr Illingworth succeeds in harmonising his acceptance of the miracles recorded in the Gospels with his knowledge of history and his experience of life. He takes the sacred narratives as they stand, and ignores the conclusions of the critics. In so doing he is, of course, representative of the general body of Christian people, to

[1] *Divine Immanence*, p. 119 f.

whom his argument may therefore still fairly be addressed.

Other Christians, however, will take another course, and yet reach the same conclusion. To them this naïvely uncritical handling of Scripture will be impossible. They will rather apply to its interpretation all the knowledge which has accumulated and which bears on the problems it presents. They will find the key to the evangelists' record in the facts of psycho-therapy and the teachings of psychology. The New Testament, held to its historic context, and interpreted as the production of its own time and place, becomes more intelligible and not less spiritually impressive. The miracles of healing ascribed to Jesus Christ are seen to form no exception to the normal experience of mankind, but only to be supreme illustrations of phenomena which are conterminous with human life. "The practice of Jesus as described by the First Three Evangelists," writes Dr Carpenter, "may be connected by an unbroken chain with phenomena to be witnessed at the present day among the witch doctors of West Africa or the devil dancers of India." [1]

A more orthodox thinker than Dr Carpenter,

[1] *The Bible in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 366.

the late Archbishop Temple, expresses the same view more cautiously :

> " Take again any of our Lord's miracles of healing. There is no question at all that the power of mind over body is exceedingly great, and has never yet been thoroughly examined. We know almost nothing of the extent of this power, of its laws, of its limits. Marvellous recoveries often astonish the physician, and he cannot account for them except by supposing that in some way the powers of the mind have been roused to interfere with the working of the nervous system. . . . His (Christ's) miracles of healing may have been the result of this power of mind over body. It is possible that they may be due not to an interference with the uniformity of nature, but to a superiority in His mental power to the similar power possessed by other men. Men seem to possess this power both over their own bodies and over the bodies of others in different degrees. Some can influence other men's bodies through their minds more; some less. Possibly He may have possessed

> this power absolutely where others possessed it conditionally. He may have possessed it without limit; others within limits. If this were so, these acts of healing would not be miracles in the strictly scientific sense. They would imply very great superiority in Him to other men. But they would be in themselves under the law of uniformity." [1]

Well do I recall the surprise and relief which I felt when, as an undergraduate, I heard these words spoken in the pulpit of St Mary's, Oxford. They set me on a course of thinking which has led me far, and, as I am persuaded, in the right direction.

In 1886 Dr Abbott published his remarkable little book, *The Kernel and the Husk*, in which the view expressed in the Bampton Lecture of 1884 was still more clearly expressed. Distinguishing between "miracles" and "mighty works," he pointed out that while the first did not seem adequately supported by Gospels when critically studied, the latter did not really conflict with human experience, being indeed notable examples of the familiar phenomenon known as "faith-

[1] *The Relations between Religion and Science*, Bampton Lectures, 1884.

healing." He directed attention to the significant statement of the earliest evangelist, St Mark, that at Nazareth Jesus "could do no mighty work" because the requisite faith was lacking, and to the not less significant modification of that statement by the later evangelist, St Matthew:

> "This confession is so frank and almost scandalising in its plainness that we cannot be surprised that the later evangelist, in his parallel narrative, softens it down by omitting the words 'was not able,' and by inserting 'many.' We need by no means infer from this narrative that Jesus attempted 'mighty works' and failed. It may be that He did not attempt them because He discerned the faithlessness of those around Him, and felt His own consequent inability. But, interpret it as we may, this passage remains a most important confirmation of the other passages in which Jesus Himself implies the necessity of faith. Where there was no faith, there Jesus '*was not able to do any mighty work*'; and this limit to His power Jesus Himself recognised." [1]

[1] *The Kernel and the Husk*, p. 161.

The critical handling of Scripture raised formidable questions in the region of formal theology, for the dogmatic confessions of the Churches had all been framed on a view of inspiration which clothed the sacred text with infallibility. Devout sentiment was outraged by the suggestion that inspiration was not inconsistent with error. It is not to be wondered at, that the first essays in Biblical criticism should have provoked a vehement storm, though it is only by an effort that our generation, habituated to religious novelties, can understand the passionate resentment with which our fathers were filled by *Essays and Reviews*, or recall without a smile the half-fearful interest which we ourselves felt in *Lux Mundi*. The process, though fraught with difficulty, was equally inevitable and irresistible. First the Old Testament was surrendered to the critics: and then, not without protests which are yet audible, the New. It was perceived that the inspired authors were children of their own age, and that it was involved in the mystery of the Incarnation that the Incarnate in entering history should Himself accept the limitations of time and place. So much, perhaps, may fairly be said to have secured general recognition:

"It must be accepted as a fact," writes Bishop Gore, "that in dealing with the books of Scripture our Lord used the language and knowledge of the time, and showed, at least, no signs of transcending it; just as He showed no sign of transcending the knowledge which belonged to His age or country." [1]

Dr Headlam, the Bishop of Gloucester, is equally clear:

> "There is no reason to think that here (*i.e.* in methods of interpreting Scripture), any more than in any other departments of thought, Jesus had knowledge of the scientific kind differing from that of His own time. . . . Jesus speaks in the language of the day. He is concerned with the thoughts and aspirations then current. His words would be such as would be comprehensible to any peasant of Nazareth or fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. We must learn to interpret Him from His environment." [2]

If, then, this be the case, it follows that the Christian student, seeking to discover in the sacred record guidance for himself as he

[1] *The Holy Spirit and the Church*, p. 258.
[2] *Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, pp. 129, 130.

handles the problems of his own time, must distinguish with all possible care between the Divine message and the vehicle through which it has been conveyed to mankind.

"*We have the treasure in earthen vessels*," says St Paul, and we shall go far astray if we confuse the one with the other. How far, then, is the testimony of the New Testament to be discounted by the inevitable admixture of contemporary error? How far must we revise its statements in the light of modern knowledge? To take a crucial example, can we regard the narratives of demonic possession which the Gospels contain as authenticating the doctrine of devils which those narratives assume? Does Christ's treatment of disease as the work of demons justify modern healers in taking the same view? It is not superfluous to remind ourselves that grave mischiefs have resulted in the past from a literal reading of the Scriptures. Literalism may be a gross and perilous mishandling of the sacred text, enchaining modern Christians to ancient limitations, and immersing them in gross and disastrous errors. "*The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life*," said St Paul. Literalism, by tying the student to the letter of the Bible, obscures for him its quickening

spirit. The history of literalism is melancholy reading. It runs through the record of Christianity as a tradition of fanaticism and crime. A notorious example is provided by the belief in witchcraft. Why did it retain its hold on men's minds long after its baselessness had been perceived ? It was steadily dying out because its absurdity insulted the reason, while its cruelty shocked the conscience. Yet it was revived, given fresh hold on Christian belief, perpetuated in Christendom until our own time. It is the case that in the year 1863 an old Frenchman was done to death in Essex for alleged witchcraft. What gave this miserable delusion its amazing hold on Christian people ? The answer is clear and unquestioned. It was nothing else than literalism. Not merely poor and ignorant believers, but men of learning, piety, and position like Sir Thomas Browne, Sir Matthew Hale, and Joseph Glanvil, who were justly honoured by their contemporaries, cherished the delusion because they found it in the Scripture. John Wesley's opinion has been often quoted :

> " It is true," he writes in his *Journal*, " that the English in general, and indeed

> most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it; and I willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them no such service. I take knowledge these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread throughout the nation, in direct opposition not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that *the giving up witchcraft is, in effect, giving up the Bible.*" [1]

The same literalism as led John Wesley to make belief in witchcraft a cardinal requirement of Christ's religion is leading many Christians of our own time to associate themselves with the movement known as " Spiritual Healing " or " Christian Healing." It is not without suggestiveness that the belief in witchcraft and the practice of

[1] *Journal*, 1768.

"Touching for the King's Evil"—a form of faith-healing very popular among our ancestors—declined together. "As the last authenticated case of witchcraft appears to have been in 1712, so the last recorded instance of healing appears to have been that of Dr Johnson, whose royalist and high Tory parents in 1712, as we learn from Boswell's life, took their infant son, at the age of $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, to be touched, and to have the angel hung round his neck by Queen Anne, for the disease from which he suffered to his dying day." [1]

Mr Hickson's handling of the Scriptures is marked by the crudest literalism. Indeed, he seems to stake everything on his literal interpretation of the New Testament. Here is a sufficient illustration :

> "If the Church has no power or authority from Christ to heal the sick, then Scripture is untrue, and we as believers have been misled, and the Church is misleading others by giving to them a Gospel which contains promises which cannot be taken at their face value.

[1] *Side-lights on the Stuarts*, by F. A. Inderwick, Q.C., p. 362. London, 1891.

> In fact, we are forced to the conclusion that, if Christian Healing is a myth, the teaching and promises of Christ are untrue. If, however, it is all true—that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; that He is with us to-day and always as He promised to be; that He gave to His Church the power and authority to heal the sick as well as to preach the Gospel, with the promise: 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me the works that I do shall he do also: and greater works than these shall he do: because I go unto the Father'; then what a crime it is that the Church is not fulfilling her commission to the sick and suffering, who are in pain and distress, and calling out on every side, 'God help us.'" [1]

We shall return to the question of the Church's commission; here we are concerned with Mr Hickson's thorough-going literalism. Reading the New Testament thus literally it is not surprising that he believes in demonic possession, and claims to cast out devils. In fact, he appears to regard

[1] *Heal the Sick*, p. 237.

himself, and is certainly regarded by his admirers, as simply reproducing the ministry of Jesus Christ as it stands on record in the Gospels. An American eye-witness pictures what happened in China in the very language of the New Testament. "Mr Hickson," he says, "went among the people as our Lord must have done, using the same methods as He used, and affecting the same cures as He accomplished, in the same name and in the same way." It does not appear that Mr Hickson claims to have raised the dead, though his language seems to imply that he can do so. Other "spiritual healers" do not hesitate to carry their literalism to this length. "Pentecostal missionaries," we are told, "in the Congo region testify that even the dead have been raised through the vital faith not of mature Christians, but of people who a few years ago were cannibals with no written language." [1]

[1] *Miracles of Healing*, vol. iv., No. 12, p. 258. December 1924.

CHAPTER VII

EXORCISM

EVERY student of the New Testament must be impressed by the large place which the "casting out of devils" ("*unclean spirits*") holds in the record of the life of Jesus. St Mark, the earliest of the synoptic evangelists, is conspicuous by the prominence which he gives to exorcising. In the case of the epileptic boy from whom a "*dumb and deaf spirit*" was cast out,[1] possession seems to be closely connected with disease.[2] In one place the Galilean ministry of Jesus is gathered up in the two activities—*preaching and casting out devils*.[3] Attention is directed to the knowledge of Jesus which the devils possessed,

[1] ix. 14 f.

[2] Menzies, *The Earliest Gospel*, "Excursus on the Demons of the Synoptic Gospels," p. 68 f.: "It is not the case that the Jews with whom Jesus had to deal put down all maladies to the action of spirits, so that they had no other way but this to speak of ailments, bodily or mental. That is true of primitive therapeutics."

[3] i. 39.

to their dread of Him, and to His authority over them. The scribes, unable to dispute the success of His exorcisms, attempted to explain them as verily works of darkness. "*By the prince of the devils casteth He out the devils.*" [1] It was with reference to this desperate bigotry which "*blasphemed the Holy Spirit,*" that Jesus spoke the sternest words which the Gospels contain: "*Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit.*" [2] When Jesus commissioned the Twelve we are told that "*He gave them authority over the unclean spirits.*" [3] Their ministry is described as threefold. "*They went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*" [4] There is no mention of exorcising in the Commission to the Church, but in the Appendix to St Mark's Gospel the Risen Christ is represented as including the exorcising of devils among the "*signs*" that would "*follow them that believe.*" [5] Exorcism retained in the ministry of the Apostles the prominence

[1] iii. 22. [2] iii. 29, 30. [3] vi. 7.
[4] vi. 12, 13. [5] xvi. 17.

which it had held in the ministry of their Master. It is evident from a curious record in the Acts that St Paul enjoyed a considerable reputation as an exorcist, for his enemies paid him the compliment of imitating his distinctive method. The description must be quoted in full :

> " And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul ; insomuch that unto the sick were carried away from his body handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out. But certain also of the strolling Jews, exorcists, took upon them to name over them which had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, which did this. And the evil spirit answered, and said unto them, Jesus I know, and Paul I know ; but who are ye ? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and mastered both of them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And

this became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, that dwelt at Ephesus ; and fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. Many also of them that had believed came, confessing, and declaring their deeds. And not a few of them that practised curious arts brought their books together, and burned them in the sight of all : and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed." [1]

" The writer is here," observes Sir William Ramsay, " rather a picker-up of current gossip, like Herodotus, than a real historian." [2] But the fact of St Paul's activity as an exorcist is proved by a narrative which is unquestionably historical in the fullest sense. At Philippi he exorcised the maid who was possessed by " *a spirit of divination* " with the formula, " *I charge thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.*" [3] Rather surprisingly, no mention is made of exorcism in the epistles of St Paul, though in one passage he seems to identify the pagan gods

[1] xix. 11–20.

[2] *St Paul the Traveller*, p. 273.

[3] xvi. 16 f.

with devils.[1] In the first Pastoral Epistle there is a description of apostates who "*gave heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.*"[2]

When we pass from the canonical writings to the earliest ecclesiastical records we are still encountered with demons and exorcisms. There is in this respect no break between the first century and its immediate successors. All alike were devil-ridden. "It was as exorcisers that Christians went out into the great world, and exorcism formed one very powerful method of their mission and propaganda." Harnack's excursus on "*The Conflict with Demons*" in his well-known book, *The Expansion of Christianity*, contains a mass of information. It was to successful exorcising that the Apologists pointed as a convincing evidence of the Christian religion. The demons were compelled to attest the authority of their Divine Conqueror. "We do more than repudiate the demons," says Tertullian, "we overcome them, we expose them daily to contempt, and exorcise them from their victims, as is well known to many people."

Now what are we to make of all this? Demon possession has disappeared so completely from the experience of modern Europeans,

[1] 1 Cor. x. 20. [2] 1 Tim. iv. 1.

that it is extremely difficult to understand the point of view of communities in which it was a familiar phenomenon. What are we to understand by demon possession ? What is the modern equivalent, if indeed there be one ? Mr Micklem in his careful and illuminating little book, *Miracles and the New Psychology: A Study in the Healing Miracles of the New Testament*, would find an answer in the records of the modern mission field and in the proceedings of modern spiritualists :

> " It has been my endeavour," he says, " to show the essential connection between mediumistic-phenomena and possession-phenomena as they may be observed in the world at the present day, and by implication the obvious connection between these and the demon-possession of New Testament and subsequent times." [1]

He reminds us that demon-possession is clearly conditioned by the beliefs of the people and by their degree of culture :

> " It is necessary to bear in mind that the phenomena of possession are frequent in societies where there is a widespread

[1] P. 79.

belief in the existence of spirits and demons, and are extremely rare (if they occur at all) where such beliefs are not effectively held. Consequently we find them in localities where the religion of the people is in main animistic, and but rarely where the general culture is on a higher level. Possession in Western Europe is not common, although pathological cases are occasionally met with in which phenomena are exhibited which can be scarcely distinguished from, if they are not identical with, those characteristic of this malady. It is significant that, even in countries where possession is well known, cases are more common in remote parts of the country than in cities where there is more contact with the outside world. A Chinese of Pekin wrote in reply to a questionary sent out by Nevius: 'Cases of possession are less frequent in peaceful times, and more frequent in times of civil commotion; less frequent in prosperous families, more so in unlucky ones; less frequent among educated people, and more so among the ignorant.'" [1]

[1] Pp. 62, 63.

This association of social dislocation and morbid beliefs is familiar enough to the historian. Again and again within Christendom recrudescences of buried superstitions have synchronised with epochs of public misery. What was written of the Thirty Years' War might be in measure applied to every war :

> " Terror, suffering, the loss of all effective spiritual guidance and the absence of all controlling mental discipline drove the population at large—and first and foremost the soldiers who were the prime agents of the universal unsettlement—headlong into the wildest and most irrational varieties of misbelief. In the earlier years of the War the popular delusions as to witches and witchcraft from time to time demanded their saturnalia of sacrifice ; but, as the conflict went on, men's minds became more and more unhinged by the volume of sufferings which overwhelmed the country ; and though these very sufferings diverted public attention from minor causes, or supposed causes, of trouble and calamity, we hear to the last of wholesale burnings

> of witches—as if something must be done to balance the account with the author of evil." [1]

If the phenomena of demonic possession are inseparable from certain popular beliefs, which are themselves distinctive of primitive societies, and cannot survive the diffusion of culture save in pathological forms, it would seem inevitable that we should regard them as subjective in origin, the self-woven terror of ignorant superstition. Exorcism in that case can be no more than a suggestive fiction adapted to a specific mental condition, and only so far justifiable as it may be effective.

That exorcism is effective in some cases is very confidently maintained by Mr Hickson and his friends. He publishes in his book, and therefore may be assumed to approve, the following description of his proceedings at Calcutta in 1921 :

> " Those who heard will never forget his treatment of the mad and epileptic—his appeal to God, his command to the evil spirit of possession (for he believes

[1] Sir A. Ward on " The Peace of Westphalia," in *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iv. p. 423.

that disease is in many of these cases a possession of the devil). I heard one such man who knew no English resist him *in English*—' Take him away. Cast him out. Do not let him touch me. He will defile me,' he kept protesting. I am told that that has happened before, and that the devil, possessing some poor soul, has spoken in a tongue unknown to the sufferer. From one woman I saw the devil cast out instantly, before my eyes ; and she knew it, and gave thanks to God, taking the bracelet off her arm in her immediate need to express her gratitude—' Let it help to send help to others like me.' "[1]

It is important to notice that the crowd on this occasion is said to have been composed of " Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems, Jews, and Christians of every denomination."

Similarly, in Australia, we are told that Mr Hickson exorcised successfully :

" In certain forms of epilepsy and other maladies he was convinced that behind the disease were obsessions of demoniac powers and evil spirits which had to be

[1] *Heal the Sick*, p. 65.

> exorcised before relief could be administered. This was particularly noticeable in mental cases and in those of epileptic deformity, when all his efforts had to be marshalled against the enemy." [1]

It is sufficiently apparent to the reader of Mr Hickson's book that both he himself and those with whom he was associated conceived of his Missions of Healing as an almost exact reproduction of the Mission of Jesus as described in the Gospels. In the East the physical and social conditions facilitated the notion. It was, writes an enthusiastic eye-witness of the work in China, " a veritable return to New Testament times with New Testament methods."

The Bishop of Grahamstown is equally emphatic. " Once more," he says, " we were carried back by the sights we saw and by what we did ' to the Gospel story.' The mission was ' the Gospel in action,' as was well said to me." [2]

We must needs ask whether this assumption of a substantial identity between the phenomena described by the evangelists and those present at Mr Hickson's missions can be

[1] *Heal the Sick*, p. 175. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 119.

allowed? Do the evangelists authenticate our modern faith-healers? Do the faith-healers give us the key to the evangelists? How far do the Gospels commit the Church to the crude demonology which is everywhere apparent in them?

Bishop Gore, while frankly allowing that the knowledge of Jesus did not, so far as the Gospels enable us to know, transcend that of His contemporaries, makes an exception in the case of demonology.

> "The emphasis which Jesus Christ lays on diabolic agency is so great that, if it is not a reality, He must be regarded either as seriously misled about realities which concern the spiritual life, or else as seriously misleading others. And in neither case could He be even the perfect Prophet." [1]

It may, however, be pointed out that the "emphasis" arises solely from the prominence of the phenomena in the record, and, if the phenomena themselves were misconceived, adds no new factor to the problem. The suggested dilemma—either infallibility in

[1] *Thoughts on Religion*, by Romanes, ed. Gore. Note on p. 180.

the matter of demonology, or disqualifying spiritual error—is as reckless as it is unnecessary. We can know no more about the conditions of the Incarnation than the evidence of the New Testament enables us to know, and that evidence shows that in His general view of disease and possession Jesus stood with His contemporaries.

It is the besetting sin of orthodox theologians (against which none has protested more emphatically than Bishop Gore), to postulate their own assumptions as the premisses of their argument.

Demonology has never been formally repudiated, but has gradually faded out of the Church's faith. Exorcism has survived rather as an archaic curiosity than as an active ministry. The exorcist is indeed still included in the ecclesiastical system, where he is reckoned among the minor orders of clergy. At his ordination it was anciently the custom, as required by the 4th Council of Carthage, for the bishop to hand him a book of written forms of exorcism with the bidding, "Take and commit to memory, and receive power to lay hands on energumens, whether baptized or catechumens." The medieval service included the prayer that the ordained exorcists

might "have power and authority to coerce unclean spirits," and described them as "spiritual commanders for the casting out of demons from possessed bodies with all their manifold iniquity."

"It is somewhat curious," observes Maskell, "that whilst the Roman Catholic Church has allowed the office of exorcists to die out of practice, the reformed Anglican Church recognises the duties and powers of exorcists, subject to certain rules and limits. The canons of 1604 are still of binding authority over the clergy of the Anglican Church: and the seventy-second canon strictly forbids any minister, 'without the licence of the bishop of the diocese, to attempt upon any pretence whatever, either of possession or obsession, by fasting and prayer, to cast out any devil or devils, under pain of the imputation of imposture or cosenage, and deposition from the ministry.' I am not able to say by what form of ordination the power to exorcise is now given to the ministers spoken of in the canon." [1]

The seventy-second canon had its origin in a curious history which is worth recalling:

During the reign of Elizabeth great efforts

[1] *Monumenta Ritualia Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ*, ii. 180.

were made by the Papacy to recover its spiritual dominion over the English people. No method that unscrupulous cunning could suggest or reckless zeal attempt was left unemployed. Along with the assassin, the tract-writer, the plotter, and the confessor appeared also the exorcist. We are told that the influence of exorcisms in bringing about conversions was especially potent. In this astonishing campaign the Jesuit, William Weston, was conspicuous. His methods have been recorded in the curious writings of Harsnett, afterwards Archbishop of York, and a leading Laudian.

> " Shortly before Weston came to England there was one of those strange outbreaks which have not been unfrequent in France. Besides a series at Laon in 1566, there had been some manifestations at Soissons in 1582, and while the excitement was at its height fifteen of the seminarists from Rheims were in that city for ordinations. When the manifestations began in England, Weston superintended them, and was assisted by twelve priests, seminarists all of them. . . . The exorcisms took place

in public in the houses of noblemen and other well-known men. . . . The unfortunates were taken about the country, and exorcisms were performed in various places. The *modus operandi* was peculiar. The patient was set in a chair, and made to swallow a ' holy potion ' composed of sack, salad oil, drugs, and rue (about a pint); the head was then held over a dish of burning sulphur, asafœtida, galbanum, St John's wort, and rue. Half-stifled and intoxicated the exorcisms began. In Weston's own account of an exorcism of Marwood, he says that he placed his hand on the demoniac's head, who at once fell into a fury, and made all to ring with crying, swearing, and blaspheming. ' Take away that dreadful hand in the name of all the devils in hell ! ' was the agonising cry. But the father would not quit his hold. He pursued the devil down his back, his reins, his close parts, his thighs, his legs, *usque ad talos*, and down to his ankle-bones : then fetching him back along the same route finally grasped him round the neck. ' *Deus immortalis* ! what a passion was he then cast (in). Not the tongues of

> 1000 men (I imagine) can express it.' Relics when applied were known and described; especial reverence was shown, of course, to those of Campion; nails, lumps of lead, knives came from their bodies; and under the exorcisms the truth of the Catholic Faith was asserted. These manifestations went on for about eighteen months, and from October 1585 to June 1586 were of almost daily occurrence. The imprisonment of Ballard and Weston, however, effectually put an end to them."

Mr Taunton, from whose pages we have quoted, expresses himself with judicious reserve. "Experience," he says, "points out that the proper attitude in such cases is at least a suspension of assent." And he quotes the witty saying, "Historians have never made sufficient allowance for the deliberate lying of witnesses incapable of deception."

> "At an early date in the proceedings Tyrell says he had misgivings as to the reality of the cases. He communicated his doubts to two other exorcists, one of whom exhorted him to a 'goodly credulity,' and the other insisted 'that they

were of such importance as would farther the Catholic cause more than all the books that had been written of late years about the controversies of religion with the Protestants.' " [1]

That there was much deliberate fraud mingled with the abject credulity is certain, but the latter was by no means a Jesuit *peculium*.

Protestants had regarded the proceedings of the Popish exorcists with doubtful and divided minds. They were convinced believers in demonic possession, but wholly sceptical of Jesuit pretensions. The spectacle of these triumphant exhibitions of spiritual power was embarrassing to the English Government, but intolerably humiliating to the English Puritans. Did anti-Christ indeed possess a monopoly of supernatural authority ? Perish the thought ! It occurred to Mr John Darrel, a Puritan preacher, to challenge the papists on their own ground. The false miracles should be thrown into the shade by the true. In 1586 he entered on his career as an exorcist, and quickly attained to celebrity. St Mary's in Nottingham was

[1] Taunton's *History of the Jesuits in England*, c. vii.

thronged by eager congregations gathered by his fame to listen to his thrilling tales of devils and possession. In due course the authorities intervened. Puritans were hardly more to Elizabeth's liking than Jesuits! Darrel was inhibited by the Archbishop of York, and brought before the Council. His tools confessed their impostures, and in May 1599 he was pronounced an impostor, degraded from the ministry, and committed to prison. The immediate cause of the seventy-second canon of 1604 was the scandal of Darrel's exorcisms.[1]

Possession by demons was the only explanation of certain physical phenomena which occurred to men who were ignorant of the very conception of natural "law," but it could not long survive the triumph of that conception. With the advance of physical science it came to bear an archaic and irrational aspect, and was soon felt to be superfluous as well as seen to be absurd. It held its place, indeed, in the conventional language of the Church, and had its formal recognition in the Church's system, but it had lost practical importance, and grew into complete neglect.

"Wellnigh the whole of such superiority

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography*, "John Darrel."

to savagery as our civilisation can boast," writes Mr M'Dougall, "is due to our successful application of the conception of causation." Demonology contradicts that conception, and carries those who accept it back into the mental and moral confusions from which civilisation has lifted mankind. "The most successful exorcist is science, albeit science works not by faith in the theory, but by rejection of it." [1]

"That there were many demoniaques in the Primitive Church, and few mad-men and other such singular diseases," observed Hobbes demurely, "whereas in these times we hear of and see many mad-men and few demoniaques, proceeds not from the change of nature, but of names." [2]

The cynical philosopher puts the case in a nutshell. The maladies which occupied the exorcist in the past are now treated by the physician and alienist. It will be a woeful "throw-back" to a lower plane of thinking and living if ever the exorcist resumes his functions in the modern world.

[1] Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 181.
[2] *Leviathan*, p. 356.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE UNCTION OF THE SICK

Two passages in the New Testament connect healing with anointing. Of the Apostles, when Jesus sent them forth "*by two and two*" through Palestine, we read that "*they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them*";[1] and, in the Epistle of St James, the sick Christian is bidden to receive anointing from "*the elders of the Church.*"[2] The primitive ecclesiastical practice of anointing the sick was based on these passages, and, in the sixteenth century, the Council of Trent found in them Scriptural warrant for the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. At the Reformation the primitive practice was discontinued and the Sacrament disallowed. There is now a strong, and probably a growing, desire that the former should be restored, and proposals for including in the revised Prayer Book an office for the anointing of the sick have received weighty

[1] St Mark vi. 13. [2] v. 13–16.

support. The Committee appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, in accordance with Resolution 63 of the last Lambeth Conference, recommended that, after prayer and (if necessary) confession, unction should be administered. It is, however, significant that Sir Clifford Allbutt and Sir Robert Armstrong Jones dissociated themselves from this recommendation.

Oil was a very prominent feature in the system of the Primitive Church. At baptism and at confirmation, which then commonly followed baptism immediately, unction was employed. Some Manichæan heretics in the fifth century, exaggerating (as is the wont of heretics) some orthodox tendency, even substituted oil for water in administering baptism, and there is reason to think that this reprehensible practice was not wholly unknown in some orthodox communities. As early as the fourth century the baptismal water was exorcised, while oil was poured crosswise into the font. The formula of exorcism employed discloses the point of view which determined the elaborate ceremonial of the Sacrament :

> " Then thou makest a cross with the chrism, and sayest : I exorcise thee, thou

water of God's creation ; I exorcise thee, the whole army of the devil, the whole power of the adversary, and all darkness of evil spirits ; I exorcise thee in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth, to whom the Father hath subjected all things in heaven and in earth. Fear and tremble, thou and all the malice that is thine ; give place to the Holy Spirit, that all who descend into this font may have the laver of the baptism of regeneration, unto remission of all sins, through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will come unto the judgment-seat of the Majesty of His Father with the holy angels, to judge thee thou enemy, and the world, through fire for evermore." [1]

Everything was anointed in the Primitive Church, for everything might give harbourage to the demons who pervaded the world. What " germs " and " bacilli " are to the modern Christian that demons were to his primitive or medieval predecessor. Churches, altars, sacred vessels and furniture, bells—all re-

[1] *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, article " Baptism."

ceived solemn unction with appropriate formulæ. And, of course, the sick were anointed also. In their case probably there was a mingling of allied notions. Oil was extensively used among the ancients for physical healing. Disease was in the ancient mind intimately connected with demonic activity. Oil was therefore both a medicine and a charm, and in either character it was obviously relevant to a sick Christian's condition.

"In that age and in that environment," says Loisy, "the idea of purely rational medicine did not exist, and the art of healing was more or less confused with magic, the remedies being charms. The anointing of which Mark speaks partakes at once of the nature of a religious rite, as the exorcism by which the demons are driven out, in so far as a Divine virtue is supposed to be attached to it, and of a remedy, in so far as real efficacy in healing was attributed to the element itself." [1] Custom dictated a practice which superstition could interpret.

We possess the "Prayer Book" of Bishop Sarapion, the friend and correspondent of St Athanasius, "an Egyptian Pontifical, dated

[1] *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, vol. i. p. 901.

probably about A.D. 350–356," as it is described on the title-page of the convenient edition published by S.P.C.K. It includes the following " prayer in regard to oil for the sick or for bread or for water," which deserves the careful consideration of those who would revive the ancient practice of anointing the sick. Can they restore the mentality which this prayer discloses ?

> " We invoke thee who hast all authority and power, the Saviour of all men, father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and pray thee to send healing power of the only-begotten from heaven upon this oil, that it may become to those who are being anointed (with it), or are partaking of these thy creatures, for a throwing off of every sickness and every infirmity, *for a charm against every demon, for a separation of every unclean spirit, for an expulsion of every evil spirit,* for a driving out of all fever and ague, and every infirmity, for good grace and remission of sins, for a medicine of life and salvation, for health and soundness of soul, body, spirit, for perfect strengthening. *O Master, let every Satanic*

energy, every demon, every device of the adversary, every plague, every scourge, every pain, every labour or stroke or shaking or evil shadowing, fear thy holy name which we have now invoked and the name of the only-begotten; and let them depart from the inward (and) the outward parts of these thy servants, that his name may be glorified who for us was crucified and rose again, who took up our sicknesses and our infirmities, (even) Jesus Christ, and who is coming to judge quick and dead. Because through him to thee (is) the glory and the strength in Holy Spirit both now and to all the ages of the ages. Amen."

Very justly does Mr Newbolt warn us that "the question of bodily healing, whether spiritual or medicinal, seems to be that upon which the Primitive Church is least fitted to be our guide." He adds an observation which no modern student of primitive Christianity can afford to forget: "We cannot think ourselves back into the world in which they (the Fathers) moved, for those ages of history are closed and separated from us by a gulf of time, and to sweep away God's

teaching of centuries is not an act of faith but a gesture of reaction." [1]

The patristic mind, as disclosed in the doctrine and practice of unction, is indeed sufficiently remote.

The spiritual potency of oil was acquired by episcopal or priestly consecration, or by contact with the person of a saint, or by ecclesiastical use, or by association with sacred places. The uses to which the holy oil might be applied were as various as the sources from which its efficacy was derived. Animals anointed with it were proof against the cattle-plague, and St Chrysostom recommended the anointing of the body with oil taken from the martyrs' tombs as a remedy against drunkenness. To this day the Nestorian Christians mix oil, water, and the relics of some saint, or, if these are not to be procured, dust from the scene of a martyrdom, and anoint the sick with the mixture.

In the case of the sick, however, there was, behind the mountainous development of crass superstition, the respectable authority of the apostolic precedent recorded in the Gospel, and the ministry of the elders explicitly ordered by St James. The authority of the

[1] *Healing*, p. 54.

New Testament has sustained the practice in the acceptance of modern Christians who smile at its primitive associations. What, it may fairly be asked, is the true bearing of the New Testament references on the Church's duty ?

In itself, apart from some specific commandment, the action of the Apostles could not be reasonably regarded as a binding precedent by which the Church should determine its procedure. If the passage in St Mark's Gospel be read as a whole, it will be immediately apparent that the whole episode of the Apostles' mission has nothing to do with the historic ministry of the Church. Jesus quite obviously had in view a temporary mission under extraordinary conditions :

> " And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two ; and he gave them authority over the unclean spirits ; and he charged them that they should take nothing for their journey, save a staff only ; no bread, no wallet, no money in their purse ; but to go shod with sandals : and, said he, put not on two coats. And he said unto them, Wheresoever ye enter

into a house, there abide till ye depart thence. And whatsoever place shall not receive you, and they hear you not, as ye go forth thence, shake off the dust that is under your feet for a testimony unto them. And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and *anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*" [1]

The anointing was not included in the Lord's charge, and there is no reason for thinking that He Himself ever used it in the work of healing. It was adopted by the Apostles on their own authority, probably because it was the recognised symbol of faith-healing at the time. " As used by the Apostles and followed by immediate results," comments Dr Swete, " it was no more than a sign of healing power, but it served, perhaps, to differentiate their miracles from those performed by the Master." [2] It is, perhaps, significant that in the Appendix to the Gospel there is no mention of unction made when the recovery of the sick is included

[1] St Mark vi. 7–13.

[2] *Commentary on St Mark* in loco.

among the "signs" which "shall follow them that believe, but only of the laying on of hands." [1]

But is not the unction of the sick to be counted among the Sacraments, and so to be judged? Must we not assume that behind the practice of the Apostolic Church, as certified by St James, lies the authority of Christ? Are we not religiously bound to recover and use the ministry of healing unction as it existed in the Apostolic Church? If, without prepossessions, we examine the crucial passage, we shall have little difficulty in answering these questions.

Let it be premised that the Epistle of St James was probably written between A.D. 40 and 50, and may fairly be regarded as being the earliest portion of the New Testament. It was addressed to Jewish Christians, and evidently presupposes a phase of ecclesiastical life in which organisation was rudimentary and the dividing line between the Church and the Synagogue was lightly drawn. Indeed, St James speaks of the Christian assembly itself as the "synagogue." There is so little in the Epistle that is decisively Christian, that some scholars have argued, not without

[1] St Mark xvi. 18.

a measure of plausibility, that it was rather a Jewish composition adapted to Christian uses, than an originally Christian work. Eusebius reckons it among the "disputed" books, though he himself appears to use it as genuine. It is omitted from the catalogue of sacred books in the Muratorian Fragment (second century), and from the Old Latin canon used by Tertullian. In the East it was generally received, though Origen[1] is apparently the first who cites the Epistle as Scripture and as written by St James: "While the Church of Rome and Carthage long doubted the canonicity of the Epistle of St James, it was acknowledged from a very early period by the churches of Jerusalem and (probably) of Syria, and it is included in the catalogues of sacred books which have come down to us from the churches of Egypt and Asia Minor." Curiously enough, the earliest witnesses to the use of the Epistle belong to the Church which was one of the latest to recognise it as canonical, viz. the Church of Rome. It has been suggested that this may be explained by the fact that, in the first phase of its history, the Roman Church was mainly composed of Jewish believers. In

[1] Ob. 253.

proportion as the Gentile element in the Church increased, the Judaistic Epistle fell into the background. The predominantly practical character of the Epistle, which commends it to modern readers, prejudiced it in the eyes of readers who were more keenly interested in speculative theology. Luther allowed himself to describe it scornfully as "an epistle of straw." We shall not, then, do any injustice to the Epistle itself, if we regard it as a work of limited circulation and acceptance, which pictures rather the distinctive life of the Jewish Christian congregations than the general procedure of the Apostolic Church, in which during the lifetime of the Apostles the Gentile Churches had gained a decisive predominance.

It is at least a probable conjecture that unction of the sick by the presbyters was a Jewish Christian practice, and did not obtain outside the Jewish Christian churches until, after an interval of some two centuries, the Epistle of St James had gained general acceptance in the Church, when it passed into universal adoption with the undeserved prestige of an apostolic institution.

The passage in which the unction of the sick is mentioned runs thus :

"Is any among you suffering? let him pray. Is any cheerful? let him sing praise. Is any among you sick? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, *anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord*: and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, it shall be forgiven him. Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working. Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." [1]

It will hardly be contended that this language suggests anything of the nature of formal enactment. The writer is clearly concerned rather with the general habit of the Christian society than with ecclesiastical regulation. In joy and sorrow, in sickness

[1] St James v. 13–18.

and health, he would have the members of the Church carry themselves religiously. He takes for granted the accustomed procedures—singing, praying, laying on hands, anointing, confession of sin. These were as familiar to Jews as to Christians, and had passed without difficulty from the Jewish synagogue to the Christian. St James urges their regular and orderly use. It is surely a very gross anachronism which turns the elders into priests, the anointing into one Sacrament, and the mutual confession into another. In the first century the Christian Church was still far distant from theories of Holy Order, and precisely defined sacraments. Neither a Sacrament of Extreme Unction nor a Sacrament of Penance had come into the use and wont of believers. All was still very simple, natural, and fraternal. St James places his principal emphasis on prayer, the potency of which he illustrates by a typically Jewish reference to Elijah.

Father Puller in his learned and valuable book has been at great pains to make clear that the later association of unction and the forgiveness of sins has no justification in the language of St James. There only a physical effect attaches to the anointing, while the

forgiveness of sins must be attributed to the absolving ministry of the priests. The transition to the later view was facilitated by the declaration of Pope Innocent I (A.D. 416) that laymen as well as priests might use the oil which the bishop had hallowed. For there was no question that the power to absolve belonged to the priests alone, and therefore if absolution followed unction, unction also must be a sacerdotal ministry.

As the gross darkness of barbarism spread over Christendom, the rites of the Church became ever more elaborate and the doctrinal theory which they expressed ever more precise. Unction was administered with impressive forms and in great detail.

> "Ultimately," writes Father Puller, "it became the custom in the Latin Church, at any rate in those portions of it which follow the Roman use, to anoint the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, feet, and reins: and at each several anointing the priest says: 'Through this holy unction, and his own most tender mercy, may the Lord forgive you whereinsoever through your sense of sight,' or 'through your sense of hearing,'

or 'through your sense of smell,' etc., adapting the form to the particular part of the body which was at that moment being anointed. It will be noticed that the formula lays the whole emphasis on the gift of the remission of sins. It says nothing about any gift of spiritual comfort or exhilaration, nor does it say anything about the healing of the body or the driving away of demons. It concentrates attention on the supreme gift of the remission of sins."

Father Puller is mainly concerned to prove that the later teaching of the Church which held unction to be a sacrament for the remission of sins was really no more than what the Anglican Article calls "the corrupt following of the Apostles," and so long as the discussion is concerned with the history of the practice he is plainly successful. When, however, he proceeds to urge the duty and importance of returning to the older view of unction, as primarily designed to effect supernatural bodily healing, and presses for the restoration of the ministry in the Church of England, he seems to ignore the salient lesson of the history which, with so much learning,

he has reviewed. What was the real explanation of the transition of theory which he deplores ? Why did the Church tacitly abandon the great instrument of physical healing and substitute one more means of spiritual edification ? Was it not precisely because experience disallowed the older theory ? Unction and healing were not in point of fact united sufficiently to sustain that theory. If the practice was to continue the theory must be revised. No practice could continue for ever to mock intelligence by contradicting experience. By transforming unction into a spiritual ministry, of which the benefits were solely spiritual, the ecclesiastical procedure was transferred to a sphere where it was immune from criticism. Those who advocate the revival of the primitive unction of the sick are but calling the modern Church to traverse again, and under still more unfavourable conditions, the old cycle of mistaken faith and inevitable disillusion.

The history of the famous healing shrines of the Medieval Church tells the same story and points the same moral: Why did Christian men relinquish this priceless remedy for their physical woes, and cast aside this unique demonstration of their faith ? The policy

and greed of secular powers could never have prevailed against the supreme and evident interest of suffering mankind. But long before the Reformation let loose on the Churches the desecrating hand of the spoiler, the mischief had been accomplished. The relics of the saints had become jests on men's lips before they were scornfully scattered by their hands. The great shrines of Christendom were deserted before they were destroyed. A striking illustration is provided in the case of St Cuthbert's Shrine at Durham. Among the records of that great church is preserved a statement of the various sums received from the pilgrims who resorted to its famous scene of miraculous healing. The amounts are entered from 1378 to 1513, and they disclose in the last seventy years a marked and rapid decline, until they cease entirely. "Does not this prove," asks Mr Raine (the antiquary who directed the opening of St Cuthbert's Shrine in 1827 and disposed finally of the legend about the saint's body which Sir Walter Scott immortalised in "Marmion"), "that St Cuthbert and his cause were fast falling into disrepute long before the finishing blow was given by King Henry VIIIth?" Dr Dearmer is very

eloquent on the medieval shrines, which he offers as themselves the proofs of the cures for which they were famous. "The shrines existed," he says, "because people were healed at them, and they are themselves the best evidence of the fact that people were healed." This may be conceded, but at the same time it must be pointed out that it is not less true that the shrines were demolished because people had ceased to be healed at them, and that their ruins are the best evidence of their failure.

CHAPTER IX

CHRISTIANITY AND MEDICAL SCIENCE

What has been the influence of Christianity on the theory and practice of medicine? Apart from the phenomena of faith-healing (which is not distinctively Christian), how has Christianity affected the age-long conflict which mankind has waged with disease? On a broad view of Christian history, has mankind gained or lost by Christianity in the matter of physical healing?

The Christian religion, it must be remembered, had its birth in an intensely superstitious age, and in a nation which was behind the highest standards of the time in medical science. Greek culture was declining. Greek science was yielding to current theurgic ideas. "Under the Roman Empire, as in our own time," writes Sir Clifford Allbutt, "the recrudescence of miraculous medicine—that is, of medicine by way of religious rites—has coincided with the time

of eclipse, or at any rate of instability, of religious doctrines: and of change in our conception of the Divine Nature." [1] The religious confusions of the time facilitated the growth of superstition, and superstition has always found its most favouring condition in physical weakness. Medicine in antiquity was inextricably mixed up with charlatanry.

It can hardly be questioned that the first effect of Christianity was to strengthen the non-scientific element in medicine. The New Testament, by its emphasis on demons and the exorcising of demons, told heavily in this direction, and the assumed connection between sin and disease led sufferers to seek relief rather from religion than from science. Asceticism, which infected Christianity very early in its career, and dominated the mind of the Church for many ages, disinclined men from giving thought to secular concerns, and had a paralysing effect on all studies which did not bear directly or indirectly on theological controversy.

> "With the spread of Christianity," writes Dr Charles Singer, "interest in

[1] *British Medical Journal*, 18th June 1910.

phenomena had dwindled. The light of science had become dim, then flickered, and finally went out. Medicine alone survived—but how changed! In the absence of any theoretical interests, medical knowledge had progressively deteriorated. The anatomical, physiological, and pathological bases of medical knowledge were more and more disregarded. The later Latin medical works were thus reduced to mere lists of remedies, and entirely ignore theory. All such arbitrary treatments of mental needs bring their own nemesis. Such works from being practical become empirical, from empirical they pass to being merely rule-of-thumb, then corrupt, and finally basely superstitious. Before the process was ended, learned and Christian physicians had attached their names to material as mean and debased as any which the field-anthropologist has elicited from the lore of the lowest savages. From Hippocrates the Great of Cos to Marcellus Empiricus of Bordeaux is eight hundred years. The difference in outlook between the two is as the difference between the prac-

tice of Lister and the lowest type of magic." [1]

Christianity, however, always carried the promise of better things. The doctrine of the Incarnation had important implications which gradually disclosed themselves. Not even the reigning asceticism could altogether obscure the exalted estimate of the human body which it implied. A new reverence passed into the tradition of the healing profession. Christianity enthroned charity, that is, an active and enterprising benevolence, as the supreme expression of morality, and thereby it provided the motive and the temper which would lead men to interest themselves in the physical distresses of their fellows, and move them to extend the aids of medical science to the poorest and most necessitous members of society. If it be true that "modern medicine may be truly described as in essence a creation of the Greeks," it is not less true that the unselfish enthusiasm for healing which marks the physicians of modern Christendom is the gift of Christ's religion.

[1] "Ancient Medicine," in *Science and Civilisation*, ed. by F. S. Marvin, p. 70.

The association of disease with sin had the effect of subordinating medicine to theology, and thereby of hindering the advance of medical science. It may be plausibly conjectured that the suspicion of religious ministration to the sick which sometimes marks the modern doctor, and makes him reluctant to facilitate intercourse between the clergyman and his patient, is less the consequence of any necessary conflict of rôles than the resentment which his profession still feels against the meddlesome and unintelligent procedure of the Church in the past. Such resentments commonly are the slow growth of long accumulating frictions, and they die as slowly as they grow. One expression of the long subordination of medicine to theology has particular interest, because it appears to be returning under the new conditions of modern life. Psychology is tending to resume the insistence on confession which was once included in the disciplinary system of the Church. The history is worth recalling.

"In its anxiety to render confession universal, and possibly with an eye to legacies for pious uses," writes Lea in his great *History of Auricular Confession*, "the Lateran Council (1215) ordered that all physicians

when called in should commence by inducing the patient to confess and, after the cure of the soul had been secured, that of the body might claim attention. Two reasons were assigned for this—that sickness is often the punishment of sin, and will disappear when the sin is removed; and that the warning to seek the consolations of religion, if postponed till the patient is seriously ill, is likely to plunge him in despair. The rule was enforced by denying admission to Church to the physician disobeying it, and the whole precept was duly embodied in the canon law." [1] This rule could not be enforced. The humanity of the medieval physicians triumphed over the discipline of the Church. That discipline, however, survived the Reformation, and, in 1566, was re-enacted by St Pius V.

> "He issued a decree reviving and confirming the Lateran precept which had become obsolete through proscription (? desuetude); and to insure its observance he added that if, by the third day, the patient had not confessed and did not furnish a written certificate to

[1] Vol. i. p. 262.

> that effect, the physician must abandon him ; all physicians neglecting this were to be deprived of the doctorate, declared infamous, and fined at the discretion of the Ordinary, and all, moreover, at graduation, must take an oath before a notary to observe the rule." [1]

St Carlo Borromeo, as might have been expected from his rigorous orthodoxy and ardent zeal, was conspicuous among those who strove to enforce this law, but he met with slight success. Then the casuists got to work on the precept, and after their manner succeeded in maintaining its authority by explaining it away. The State joined hands with the Church in the attempt to secure obedience :

> " It was probably the desire to prevent final backsliding, on the part of forcibly converted Huguenots, which led to a strenuous effort in France, supported by the secular power, to enforce the papal decrees. Cardinal de Noailles, Archbishop of Paris, in 1707, issued an ordinance to this effect, which received so little obedience that it was published

[1] P. 263.

again in 1712, accompanied by a royal declaration to the effect that all physicians, in cases of fever or other disease that may prove mortal, must, on the second day, notify the patient or his family to send for a confessor; if indisposition to do this is manifested, the physician must summon the parish priest himself, and take a certificate of having done so; no visit is to be paid on the third day unless evidence is produced of a confessor having been sent for, but after this the visits may be resumed. All this is enforced under penalties of 300 livres for a first offence, three months' suspension of practice for a second, and absolute exclusion from practice during life for a third. These rules seem to have remained unrepealed until the Revolution." [1]

It is not difficult to understand the anti-clerical violence of the French Revolutionaries when one reflects on the full significance of such discipline. Dr Lea, writing in 1895, says that " the most recent theologians assert that the Lateran canon and the decree of St Pius V are still in force where they have

[1] P. 265.

been received, and have not lapsed by disuse," but that "the physician is not bound to desert a patient if there are graver reasons for remaining and there is no hope of benefiting his soul." The casuists have done their best "to save the face" of the authorities by suggesting mitigations of their system; but the system itself remains an astonishing example of the lengths to which religious theory can be pushed. This persistent effort of the ecclesiastical authorities to use the urgent physical need of the sick as a lever for extorting confession has a most repulsive aspect. It is one more evidence of the ruthlessness of orthodox logic, and also of the morally blinding effect of religious bigotry. It weighs heavily still on the reputation of organised Christianity.

The Reformation, by breaking the spell of ecclesiastical tradition, gave a mighty stimulus to intellectual activity; but within the Protestant sphere the irrational literalism, with which an infallible Bible was interpreted, went far to revive the old conflict between Christianity and science in a new form. This situation, however, could not last. Intellectual liberty, vindicated against the authority of the Church, could not be permanently

surrendered to the authority of the Book. Science soon claimed and exercised its indispensable freedom from both, and offered the truth it gained by its own sure methods to the direction of the one and the interpretation of the other. The general course of events within the Protestant sphere was illustrated by the history of the Royal Society, which received its charter of incorporation from Charles II in 1662. It was established for the improvement of *natural* science as distinct from such *supernatural* science as included witchcraft and divination, and this limitation of range provoked the suspicion of all for whom the suggested division had no real significance. In its first years the Royal Society had to run the gauntlet of much public misunderstanding and no little clerical denunciation, although it included some distinguished clergymen among its members.

" Speaking generally, there is no doubt that in the reign of Charles II the antagonism between physical science and the theological spirit was such as to induce nearly the whole of the clergy to array themselves against the science, and seek to bring it into discredit." [1]

[1] Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, vol. i. p. 372.

Religious sentiment has been, perhaps, an even more intractable factor than religious theory. The study of anatomy was long under the frown of the Church, for it was associated in the general mind with the horrifying practice of dissecting corpses. Surgical teachers were driven to strange devices to secure the indispensable materials for scientific investigation. The heavy iron guards on graves, which still survive in our older churchyards, perpetuate the sinister memory of the "resurrection men" whose exploits scared our ancestors. When vivisection replaced the dissection of corpses, it aroused against itself sentiments of repugnance none the less exasperating for being humane, and justified by religious pleas. Even so obviously reasonable and hygienic a method of disposing of the dead—a problem of cardinal importance in our crowded modern cities—as cremation is heavily disadvantaged in the public mind by its seeming conflict with crude religious beliefs. Irrational versions of Christian teaching as to the duty of resignation, the potency of prayer, and the wrongfulness of prophylactic measures against the fell poison of venereal disease, handicap the efforts of physicians, and prolong conditions

of life which are known to be injurious to the public health.

In view, then, of past history and of many continuing factors which create a conflict between Christianity and medicine, there is nothing surprising in the fact that medical men generally tend to regard with considerable suspicion any suggestion that they should recognise in the clergy friends and even colleagues. They are justly jealous of anything which might lead to a return of that baleful confusion between religious beliefs and curative science which once worked so ill.

Yet there is something to be placed in the other scale of the balance. Medical and surgical science, standing alone, might well have a morally indurating effect on the student. Is it a matter of no importance that he should have to exercise his profession in an atmosphere charged with humane ideas, and that the depressing absorption in the physical and transitory aspects of human nature should be relieved by an insistence on spiritual and everlasting realities? What is the secret magic which transforms the callous and even brutal medical student of the schools into the gentle and sympathetic doctor of common experience? May it not

be, at least in part, the subtle, unrealised influence of a society which is saturated with Christian ideas? Apart from the truth of the Christian revelation, so much might perhaps fairly be conceded; but, if indeed that revelation be true, there is still more to be said. Christianity contributes to all human effort a dignity, a joy in service, a hopefulness, which it could not otherwise possess. Experience in modern hospitals has demonstrated the superiority of Christian nurses over those who, however carefully trained, are destitute of the motives, standards, and ideals of Christian discipleship. There is a gentleness, a patience, a tenderness of personal concern about the one, which are absent from the other. It may be true, of course, that, as technical knowledge and skill become more indispensable, the process of healing becomes in a sense more impersonal, so that these purely personal traits, which are so precious in the nurse, cannot in the physician and the surgeon be similarly observed and measured. Nevertheless, is it extravagant to suppose that even the man of science may gain rather than lose by the influence of Christian faith?

CHAPTER X

THE CLERGYMAN'S CONCERN WITH SICKNESS

RELIGION and bodily health are closely linked, so closely that the minister of religion must needs be concerned with both. For health stands in obvious relation to moral conduct, and both the motives and sanctions of morality are found finally in religion. It is not, of course, true that health and virtue are in such sense united that failure of the one implies the absence of the other, but it is true that physical consequences follow some breaches of the moral law so constantly and apparently, that the general sense of mankind perforce recognises the first as the appropriate and inexorable penalty of the last. The moral teaching of the Book of the Proverbs may be crude and limited, but it is verified by the common experience, and, so far as it goes, is essentially true: "*Fear the Lord, and depart from evil: it shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*" "*My son,*

attend to my words, for they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." The preacher proposes a philosophy of life which the world will never outgrow, though its understanding of what it involves may vary greatly from age to age: "*Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.*" Temperance, purity, industry are obligations of morality which carry to the man who satisfies them the promise of physical health, and all these pedestrian virtues are integral to religion, as civilised Europeans must understand it. The connection of sin and disease cannot be concealed. The Christian minister, charged with the gospel of forgiveness, is concerned necessarily, though indirectly, with the consequences of sin, among which disease is so plainly included. But his concern is with the moral source of the physical affliction, not with the physical affliction itself.

Physical disease has psychic conditions and consequences. Mental worry may induce the excess which was the proximate cause of the physical calamity. There is a disastrous reciprocity between mind and body. Disease may occasion such a depression of mind as may aggravate it, and even go far to make it

incurable. The causes of mental depression may be ultimately moral and religious—a bad conscience or a superstitious belief. Shakespeare, in "Macbeth," has pictured a doctor confessing his powerlessness in front of such morally-occasioned physical distress. The pathetic appeal must remain unanswered :

> "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
> Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
> Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
> And with some sweet oblivious antidote
> Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
> Which weighs upon the heart?"

In this situation, where the physician *qua* physician is helpless, the clergyman may find the opportunity for exercising his distinctive ministry. He is commissioned to apply to human life, as it unfolds itself in the bewildering variety of individual need, the healing consolation of the Gospel. As in bereavement and other trouble, so in sickness, the minister of Christ has an evident duty. It could not be better stated than in the short chapter headed "*The Parson Comforting*," in George Herbert's famous book :

> "The country parson, when any of his cure is sick, or afflicted with loss of

friend, or estate, or any ways distressed, fails not to afford his best comforts, and rather goes to them than sends for the afflicted, though they can and otherwise ought to come to him. To this end he hath thoroughly digested all the points of consolation, as having continual use of them, such as are from God's general providence extended even to lilies; from his particular to his Church; from his promises; from the examples of all saints that ever were; from Christ Himself, perfecting our redemption no other way than by sorrow; from the benefit of affliction, which softens and works the stubborn heart of man; from the certainty both of deliverance and reward, if we faint not; from the miserable comparison of the moment of griefs here with the weight of joys hereafter. *Besides this, in his visiting the sick or otherwise afflicted he followeth the Church's counsel, namely, in persuading them to particular confession, labouring to make them understand the great good use of this ancient and pious ordinance, and how necessary it is in some cases. He also urgeth them to do some pious charitable*

works as a necessary evidence and fruit of their faith, at that time especially; the participation of the Holy Sacrament, how comfortable and sovereign a medicine it is to all sinsick souls; what strength and joy and peace it administers against all temptations, even to death itself, he plainly and generally intimateth to the disaffected or sick person, that so the hunger and thirst after it may come rather from themselves than from his persuasion." [1]

Such ministration to the sick as Herbert here describes has nothing to do directly with physical healing, but it certainly cannot be said to contemplate nothing but a fatal outcome of the illness. It is wholly concerned with comforting or strengthening the patient by easing his conscience, if that be troubled with memories of wrong-doing, and calming his mind, if that be disturbed by superstitious fears. Its influence in any illness where recovery was possible could not but be favourable, and might even be decisive. Where recovery was not to be contemplated, such bed-side ministry could have no other effect than that of a blessed *viaticum*.

[1] *The Country Parson*, chap. xv.

"Sick-visiting" can only be effective on the basis of confidence between the parson and the patient, and such confidence must be earned by the parson in the faithful exercise of his pastorate. It is idle to suppose that parishioners who have had no dealings with their parson in time of health will turn to him for spiritual comfort and assistance in time of sickness and trouble. The circumstances in which modern life proceeds are not favourable to the growth of spiritual relations between the incumbent and his parishioners. In the seventeenth century society was stationary, now it is fluid: then it was agricultural, now it is industrial. Then the mutual knowledge of neighbours was intimate, now it may hardly extend to an acquaintance with their names and occupations. Normally the modern clergyman's contact with sick people will be slight. Cases of infectious disease and all serious accidents will probably be removed to hospital, where a resident chaplain will be responsible for spiritual charge. The atmosphere of life was religious in Herbert's age; now it is secular, or (a worse thing) secularist. There is no sufficient foundation of common beliefs and assumptions upon which the clergyman, in

the case of most of the parishioners in the crowded town parishes, may build a spiritual ministry such as Herbert describes. The sick-room is no fitting scene for teaching, debate, and rebuke. Organised Christianity no longer has any effective hold on the majority of English folk. There were, roughly, as many communicants in England under James I, when the population was about 4,000,000, as there are under George V, when the population has multiplied nine-fold. A communicant in the seventeenth century commonly, and legally, meant a person of not less than sixteen years of age. In the twentieth century a large and waxing proportion of the communicants consists of children of quite tender years. Could anything more clearly indicate the extent and gravity of the change which has passed upon English society? It is not the hostility of the doctors, nor the reluctance of the clergy (though both of these factors have an influence), but the novel conditions under which life in England now proceeds, and the general alienation of the people from organised Christianity that have rendered this important part of pastoral work, so far as the mass of the population is concerned, almost impracticable.

From all this it must needs follow that the clergyman's contribution to the physical health of the community will not be made by ministration to sick people mainly, but by the normal course of his work. What notions about God will the people form from his sermons? What type of Christianity will they be led to adopt by his teaching and example? What standard of civic duty will his influence encourage them to accept? What personal habits will his own life commend? How will he carry himself in time of sickness, under the cloud of poverty and bereavement, in the dreaded contingency of death? Wholesome habits, lofty thoughts, manly habits of self-respecting service, calmness of mind—these tell subtly, imperceptibly, but steadily and potently, on physical health. If the basic assumption of religion be sound, and "*man doth not live by bread alone*," then a human life which gives no place for those interests and activities which are specifically religious, must be dangerously starved. By inducing his people to "*render unto God the things that are God's*," the clergyman rescues them from the moral and spiritual penury of secularism, restores the balance of their nature, which so many circumstances of indus-

trial life tend to disturb, and assists physical well-being by inducing peace of mind. It is matter of common observation that religion can bring to its sincere professor an interior calm which is superior to "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," and gives a power of physical endurance which moves the wondering admiration of those who witness it. "*The peace of God which passeth all understanding*" is a suggestive description of a phenomenon which is neither unfamiliar nor unexplained in the society of religious folk. "There can be little doubt," says Mr Harold Anson, very truly, "that the harmony of the spirit is the greatest prophylactic known to mankind against physical ill." [1]

Moreover, the parish clergyman is not only a teacher and preacher of religion. By law and custom he takes a prominent, often a leading, place in the society of his parish. Sometimes he holds municipal office: always his position lends authority to his opinions. If he be a wise and generous-minded man, his sway in the course of parochial life may be little short of decisive. In these circumstances his power of public service must needs be considerable. The parish clergyman's in-

[1] *Spiritual Healing*, p. 178.

fluence, directed steadily and intelligently, year in and year out, to the shaping of a public opinion which will assist and not hinder the hygienic efforts of the local authorities, can do much. The incumbent and the medical officer are natural allies. The parson's co-operation in projects for organising athletics, providing playing-fields, and making recreation adequate, suitable, and wholesome, may be very effective and salutary. His pastoral visitation will bring opportunities for bringing home directly to landowners and employers, whose personal friendship he has gained, their distinctive and incommunicable obligations in the social welfare of their tenants and workpeople; and if he have the courage, sympathy, and wisdom to do his duty, he may render public service of real value. But, of course, all this must grow out of, and be ancillary to, his directly spiritual work. Only as a respected and efficient minister of Christ will the parish clergyman carry any special authority in his parish. Much will turn, very much, on the manner of man he is. The conception of the Divine character which inspires his own personal religion, and gives colour to his religious teaching, will finally determine the theory and practice of his

prayer. Will he lead the people to a reverent acceptance of the teaching of science as to "the Reign of Law" in the physical universe? Will he impress on them in this connection the old prophetic truth that "*to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams*"? And the while he brings home to them the lofty and terrible reality which science discloses, will he guard the indispensable core of personal religion, the belief that God's Providence disdains not to concern itself with the individual needs of His children? To condition prayer by knowledge, and to hallow knowledge by faith—there is the problem of a reasonable religion. Some words of Dean Church are worthy of remembrance:

> "It is our power of imagination which is at fault, when it shocks us to bring God from the Throne of the universe, from the farthest bounds of His Empire, to be the Father of the fatherless and Guide of the wanderer, to the pauper's sick-bed and the petty troubles of the school-boy. It is not reason. Why should He, who made and sees and upholds all things, *not* care for the least

thing that His love and wisdom thought good to make? Would not dry reason say that if He made, He was not only *capable* of caring, He *must* care?" [1]

This conviction of God's individualising Providence is included in Christ's revelation of the Father, and it is integral to Christianity. The mighty order of the universe is unviolated, but in and through it pass the threads of personal life drawn by the Hand of Considering Love: and "*the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.*"

> "In every age and nation Christians of every sort and kind have believed themselves in contact with a living, personal, particular providence, working through material as well as spiritual means. They have felt that, in answer to prayer, or at critical moments in their life, outward events have aroused and controlled them, as distinctly as a voice or hand, things which often at the time seemed merely natural phenomena, yet afterwards were recognised as ministers of God." [2]

[1] *Pascal and Other Sermons*, p. 320.

[2] Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, pp. 2, 123.

Such a faith in God can sustain the shock of the world's suffering: it can persist through all harshness of personal fortunes, but it cannot reconcile itself to such a version of the Divine character as the faith-healers propose. There can be no favouritism in His treatment of men. The silent misery of the uncured multitudes, who carry home from the healing mission or the famous shrine nothing but the bitter paradox of their disappointment, is more religiously significant than the ecstatic joy of the few who proclaim themselves miraculously healed. Such scenes provoke more misgiving than faith, and challenge, rather than demonstrate, the Love of the Eternal. Armed with limitless healing power, we should not act so ourselves, and we are framed in such wise, that we cannot accept in Him Who made us a lower morality that we must needs acknowledge as indispensable in our own case. The nemesis of superstition is unbelief; and the unworthy notions of God, which lead men to ask for "signs," draw with them grave consequences. Not in prodigies but in the "*fruits of the Spirit*" are we bidden to trace His working.

Suffering saddens and perplexes, but it does not alienate us, for under the bitter covenant

of pain we all must live, and He suffers with us; but the partiality of favouritism, which grants exemptions from the general curse, not on any intelligible principle or in the service of any adequate cause, but by mere caprice, at this shrine or at that man's hands, alarms and revolts us. Not the credit of Churches but the Character of God is the issue at stake in this controversy. "*Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*"

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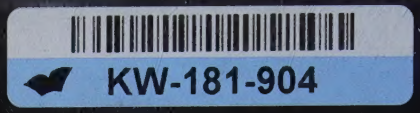
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